

TRISTRAM OF LYONESSE

AND OTHER POEMS

MR. SWINBURNE'S WORKS.

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(cont. see p. 105)

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TRISTRAM OF LYONESSE

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

NINTH IMPRESSION

LONDON

CHATTO & WINDUS

1915

*Spring speaks again, and all our woods are stirred,
And all our wide glad wastes aflower around,
That twice have heard keen April's clarion sound
Since here we first together saw and heard
Spring's light reverberate and reiterate word
Shine forth and speak in season. Life stands crowned
Here with the best one thing it ever found,
As of my soul's best birthdays dawns the third.*

*There is a friend that as the wise man saith
Cleaves closer than a brother: nor to me
Hath time not shown, through days like waves at
strife,
This truth more sure than all things else but death,
This pearl most perfect found in all the sea
That washes toward your feet these waifs of life.*

THE PINES,
April 1862.

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TRISTRAM OF LYONESSE

PRELUDE.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT.

LOVE, that is first and last of all things made,
The light that has the living world for shade,
The spirit that for temporal veil has on
The souls of all men woven in unison,
One fiery raiment with all lives inwrought
And lights of sunny and starry deed and thought,
And alway through new act and passion new
Shines the divine same body and beauty through,
The body spiritual of fire and light
That is to worldly noon as noon to night
Love, that is flesh upon the spirit of man
And spirit within the flesh whence breath began
Love, that keeps all the choir of lives in chime ;
Love, that is blood within the veins of time ;
That wrought the whole world without stroke of hand,
Shaping the breadth of sea, the length of land,
And with the pulse and motion of his breath
Through the great heart of the earth strikes life and
death,

For these too, these my lovers, these my twain,
 Saw Dante, saw God visible by pain,
 With lips that thundered and with feet that trod
 Before men's eyes incognisable God,
 Saw love and wrath and light and night and fire
 Live with one life and a one mouth require,
 And in one golden sound their whole soul heard
 Sounding, one sweet unmitigable word.

They have the night, who had like us the day;
 We, whom day birds, shall have the night as they
 We, from the fetters of the light unbound,
 Healed of our wound of living, shall sleep sound.
 All gifts but one the jealous God may keep
 From our souls longing, one he cannot—sleep.
 Thus, though he grudge all other grace to prayer,
 This grace his closed hand cannot choose but spare.
 Thus, though his ear be sealed to all that live,
 Be it lightly given or loathly, God must give.
 We, as the men whose name on earth is none,
 We too shall surely pass out of the sun,
 Out of the sound and eyeless light of things,
 Wide as the stretch of life's time wandering wings,
 Wide as the naked world and shadowless,
 And long lived as the world's own weariness.
 Us too, when all the fires of time are cold,
 The heights shall hide us and the depths shall hold.
 Us too, when all the tears of time are dry,
 The night shall lighten from her tearless eye.
 Blind is the day and eyeless all its light,
 But the large unblinded eye of night

Hath sense and speculation ; and the sheer
Limitless length of lifeless life and clear,
The timeless space wherein the brief worlds move
Clothed with light life and fruitful with light love,
With hopes that threaten, and with fears that cease,
Past fear and hope, hath in it only peace.

Yet of these lives inlaid with hopes and fears,
Spun fine as fire and jewelled thick with tears,
These lives made out of loves that long since were,
Lives wrought as ours of earth and burning air,
Fugitive flame, and water of secret springs,
And clothed with joys and sorrows as with wings,
Some yet are good, if aught be good, to save
Some while from washing wreck and wrecking wave.
Was such not theirs, the twain I take, and give
Out of my life to make their dead life live
Some days of mine, and blow my living breath
Between dead lips forgotten even of death ?
So many and many of old have given my twain
Love and live song and honey-hearted pain,
Whose root is sweetness and whose fruit is sweet,
So many and with such joy have tracked their feet,
What should I do to follow ? yet I too,
I have the heart to follow, many or few
Be the feet gone before me ; for the way,
Rose-red with remnant roses of the day
Westward, and eastward white with stars that break,
Between the green and foam is fair to take
For any sail the sea-wind steers for me
From morning into morning, sea to sea.

I.

THE SAILING OF THE SWALLOW

ABOUT the middle music of the spring
Came from the castled shore of Ireland's king
A fair ship stoutly sailing, eastward bound
And south by Wales and all its wonders round
To the loud rocks and ringing reaches home
That take the wild wrath of the Cornish foam,
Past Lyonesse unswallowed of the tides
And high Carlion that now the steep sea hides
To the wind-hollowed heights and gusty bays
Of sheer Tintagel, fair with famous days.
Above the stem a gilded swallow shone,
Wrought with straight wings and eyes of glittering
stone
As flying sunward oversea, to bear
Green summer with it through the singing air.
And on the deck between the rowers at dawn,
As the bright sail with brightening wind was drawn,
Sat with full face against the strengthening light
Iseult, more fair than foam or dawn was white.

14 *THE SAILING OF THE SWALLOW*

Her gaze was glad past love's own urging of,
 And her face lovely past desire of love.
 Past thought and speech her maiden motions were,
 And a more golden sunrise was her hair.
 The very veil of her bright flesh was made
 As of light woven and moonbeam coloured shade
 More fine than moonbeams, white her eyelids shone
 As snow sun stricken that endures the sun,
 And through their curled and coloured clouds of deep
 Luminous lashes thick as dreams in sleep
 Shone as the sea's depth swallowing up the sky's
 The springs of unimaginable eyes.
 As the wave's subtler emerald is pierced through
 With the utmost heaven's inextinguishable blue,
 And both are woven and molten in one slight
 Of amorous colour and implicated light
 Under the golden guard and gaze of noon,
 So glowed their awless amorous plendure,
 Azure and gold and ardent grey, made strange
 With fiery difference and deep interchange
 Inexplicable of glances multiform,
 Now as the sullen sapphire swells toward storm
 Foamless, their bitter beauty grew a-cold.
 And now afire with ardour of fine gold.
 Her flower soft lips were meek and passionate,
 For love upon them like a shadow sat
 Patient, a foreseen vision of sweet things,
 A dream with eyes fast shut and plumeless wings
 That knew not what man's love or life should be,
 Not had it right nor heart to hope or see

What thing should come, but childlike satisfied
Watched out its virgin vigil in soft pride
And unkissed expectation ; and the glad
Clear cheeks and throat and tender temples had
Such maiden heat as if a rose's blood
Beat in the live heart of a lily-bud.
Between the small round breasts a white way led
Heavenward, and from slight foot to slender head
The whole fair body flower-like swayed and shone
Moving, and what her light hand leant upon
Grew blossom-scented : her warm arms began
To round and ripen for delight of man
That they should clasp and circle : her fresh hands,
Like regent lilies of reflowering lands
Whose vassal firstlings, crown and star and plume,
Bow down to the empire of that sovereign bloom,
Shone sceptreless, and from her face there went
A silent light as of a God content ;
Save when, more swift and keen than love or shame,
Some flash of blood, light as the laugh of flame,
Broke it with sudden beam and shining speech,
As dream by dream shot through her eyes, and each
Outshone the last that lightened, and not one
Showed her such things as should be borne and done.
Though hard against her shone the sunlike face
That in all change and wreck of time and place
Should be the star of her sweet living soul.
Nor had love made it as his written scroll
For evil will and good to read in yet ;
But smooth and mighty, without scar or fret,

Fresh and high lifted was the helmless brow
 As the oak tree flower that tops the topmost bough,
 Ere it drop off before the perfect leaf,
 And nothing save his name he had of grief,
 The name his mother, dying as he was born,
 Made out of sorrow in very sorrow's scorn,
 And set it on him smiling in her sight,
 Tristram, who now, clothed with sweet youth and
 might,

As a glad witness wore that better name,
 The second symbol of the world for fame.
 Famous and full of fortune was his youth
 Ere the beard's bloom had left his cheek unsmooth,
 And in his face a lordship of strong joy
 And height of heart no chance could curb or cloy
 Lightened, and all that warmed them at his eyes
 Loved them as larks that kindle as they rise
 Toward light they turn to music love the blue strong
 skies.

So like the morning through the morning moved
 Tristram, a light to look on and be loved.
 Song sprang between his lips and hands, and shone
 Singing, and strengthened and sank down thereon
 As a bird settles to the second flight,
 Then from beneath his harping hands with might
 Leapt, and made way and had its fill and died,
 And all whose hearts were fed upon it sighed
 Silent, and in them all the fire of tears
 Turned as wine drunken not with lips but ears
 And gazing on his fervent hands that made
 The might of music all their souls obeyed

With trembling strong subservience of delight,
Full many a maid that had him once in sight
Thought in the secret rapture of her heart
In how dark onset had these hands borne part
How oft, and were so young and sweet of skill ;
And those red lips whereon the song burned still,
What words and cries of battle had they flung
Athwart the swing and shriek of swords, so young ;
And eyes as glad as summer, what strange youth
Fed them so full of happy heart and truth,
That had seen sway from side to sundering side
The steel flow of that terrible springtide
That the moon rules not, but the fire and light
Of men's hearts mixed in the mid mirth of fight.
Therefore the joy and love of him they had
Made thought more amorous in them and more glad
For his fame's sake remembered, and his youth
Gave his fame flowerlike fragrance and soft growth
As of a rose requickening, when he stood
Fair in their eye, a flower of faultless blood.
And that sad queen to whom his life was death,
A rose plucked forth of summer in mid breath,
A star fall'n out of season in mid throe
Of that life's joy that makes the star's life glow,
Made their love sadder toward him and more strong.
And in mid change of time and fight and song
Chance cast him westward on the low sweet strand
Where songs are sung of the old green Irish land,
And the sky loves it, and the sea loves best,
And as a bird is taken to man's breast

The sweet souled land where sorrow sweetest sings
Is wrapt round with them as with hands and wings
And taken to the sea's heart as a flower
There in the luck and light of his good hour
Came to the king's court like a noteless man
Tristram, and while some half a season ran
Abode before him harping in his hall,
And taught sweet craft of new things musical
To the dear maiden mouth and innocent hands
That for his sake are famous in all lands.
Yet was not love between them, for their fate
Lay wrapt in its appointed hour at wait,
And had no flower to show yet, and no sting.
But once being vexed with some past wound the king
Bade give him comfort of sweet baths, and then
Should Iscalt watch him as his handmaiden,
For his more honour in men's sight, and ease
The hurts he had with *holy remedies*
Made by her mother's magic in strange hours
Out of live roots and life compelling flowers.
And finding by the wounds shape in his side
This was the knight by whom their strength had died
And all their might in one man overthrown
Had left their shame in sight of all men shown,
She would have slain him swordless with his sword,
Yet seemed he to her so great and fair a lord
She heaved up hand and smote not, then said he,
Laughing—'What comfort shall this dead man be,
Damsel? what hurt is for my blood to heal?
But set your hand not near the toothèd steel

Lest the fang strike it.'—'Yea, the fang,' she said,
'Should it not sting the very serpent dead
That stung mine uncle? for his slayer art thou,
And half my mother's heart is bloodless now
Through thee, that mad'st the veins of all her kin
Bleed in his wounds whose veins through thee ran thin.'
Yet thought she how their hot chief's violent heart
Had flung the fierce word forth upon their part
Which bade to battle the best knight that stood
On Arthur's, and so dying of his wild mood
Had set upon his conqueror's flesh the seal
Of his mishallowed and anointed steel,
Whereof the venom and enchanted might
Made the sign burn here branded in her sight.
These things she stood recasting, and her soul
Subsiding till its wound of wrath were whole
Grew smooth again, as thought still softening stole
Through all its tempered passion ; nor might hate
Keep high the fire against him lit of late ;
But softly from his smiling sight she passed.
And peace thereafter made between them fast
Made peace between two kingdoms, when he went
Home with hands reconciled and heart content,
To bring fair truce 'twixt Cornwall's wild bright strand
And the long wrangling wars of that loud land.
And when full peace was struck betwixt them twain
Forth must he fare by those green straits again,
And bring back Iseult for a plighted bride
And set to reign at Mark his uncle's side.

So now with feast made and all triumphs done
 They sailed between the moonfall and the sun
 Under the spent stars eastward, but the queen
 Out of wise heart and subtle love had seen
 Such things as might be, dark as in a glass,
 And lest some doom of theirs should come to pass
 Bethought her with her secret soul alone
 To work some charm for marriage union
 And strike the heart of Iseult to her lord
 With power compulsive more than stroke of sword.
 Therefore with marvellous herbs and spells she
 wrought

To win the very wonder of her thought,
 And brewed it with her secret hands and blest
 And drew and gave out of her secret breast
 To one her chosen and Iseult's handmaiden,
 Brangwaun, and bade her hide from sight of men
 This marvel covered in a golden cup,
 So covering in her heart the counsel up
 As in the gold the wondrous wine lay close,
 And when the last shout with the last cup rose
 About the bride and bridegroom bound to bed,
 Then should this one word of her will be said
 To her new married maiden child, that she
 Should drink with Mark this draught in unity,
 And no lip touch it for her sake but theirs
 For with long love and consecrating prayers
 The wine was hallowed for their mouths to pledge;
 And if a drop fell from the beaker's edge

That drop should Iseult hold as dear as blood
Shed from her mother's heart to do her good.
And having drunk they twain should be one heart
Who were one flesh till fleshly death should part—
Death, who parts all. So Brangwain swore, and kept
The hid thing by her while she waked or slept.
And now they sat to see the sun again
Whose light of eye had looked on no such twain
Since Galahault in the rose-time of the year
Brought Launcelot first to sight of Guenevere.

And Tristram caught her changing eyes and said :
'As this day raises daylight from the dead
Might not this face the life of a dead man ?'

And Iseult, gazing where the sea was wan
Out of the sun's way, said : 'I pray you not
Praise me, but tell me there in Camelot,
Saving the queen, who hath most name of fair?
I would I were a man and dwelling there,
That I might win me better praise than yours,
Even such as you have ; for your praise endures,
That with great deeds ye wring from mouths of men,
But ours—for shame, where is it ? Tell me then,
Since woman may not wear a better here,
Who of this praise hath most save Guenevere ?'

And Tristram, lightening with a laugh held in—
'Surely a little praise is this to win,
A poor praise and a little ! but of these
Hapless, whom love serves only with bowed knees,
Of such poor women fairer face hath none
That lifts her eyes alive against the sun

Than Arthur's sister, whom the north seas call
Mistress of isles, so yet majestic
Above the crowns on younger heads she moves,
Outlightening with her eyes our late born loves.'

'Ah,' said Iseult, 'is she more tall than I?
Look, I am tall,' and struck the mast hard by,
With utmost upward reach of her bright hand,
'And look, fair lord, now, when I rise and stand,
How high with feet unlifted I can touch
Standing straight up, could this queen do thus much?
Nay, over tall she must be then, like me,
Less fair than lesser women. May this be,
That still she stands the second stateliest there,
So more than many so much younger fair,
She, born when yet the king your lord was not,
And has the third knight after Launcelot
And after you to serve her? nay, sir, then
God made her for a godlike sign to men.'

'Ay,' Tristram answered, 'for a sign, a sign—
Would God it were not! for no planets shine
With half such fearful fore-cast of men's fate
As a fair face so more unfortunate.'

Then with a smile that lit not on her brows
But moved upon her red mouth tremulous
Light as a sea bird's motion oversea,
'Yea,' quoth Iseult, 'the happier hap for me,
With no such face to bring men no such fate,
Yet her might all we women born too late
Praise for good hap, who so enskied above
Not more in age excels us than man's love.'

There came a glooming light on Tristram's face
Answering : ' God keep you better in his grace
Than to sit down beside her in men's sight.
For if men be not blind whom God gives light
And lie not in whose lips he bids truth live,
Great grief shall she be given, and greater give,
For Merlin witnessed of her years ago
That she should work woe and should suffer woe
Beyond the race of women : and in truth
Her face, a spell that knows nor age nor youth,
Like youth being soft, and subtler-eyed than age,
With lips that mock the doom her eyes presage,
Hath on it such a light of cloud and fire,
With charm and change of keen or dim desire,
And over all a fearless look of fear
Hung like a veil across its changing cheer,
Made up of fierce foreknowledge and sharp scorn,
That it were better she had not been born.
For not love's self can help a face which hath
Such insubmissive anguish of wan wrath,
Blind prescience and self-contemptuous hate
Of her own soul and heavy-footed fate,
Writ broad upon its beauty : none the less
Its fire of bright and burning bitterness
Takes with as quick a flame the sense of men
As any sunbeam, nor is quenched again
With any drop of dewfall ; yea, I think
No herb of force or blood-compelling drink
Would heal a heart that ever it made hot.
Ay, and men too that greatly love her not,

24 THE SAILING OF THE SWALLOW

Seeing the great love of her and Lamoracke,
 Make no great marvel, nor look strangely back
 When with his gaze about her she goes by
 Pale as a breathless and star quickening sky
 Between moonrise and sunset, and moves out
 Clothed with the passion of his eyes about
 As night with all her stars, yet night is black,
 And she, clothed warm with love of Lamoracke,
 Girt with his worship as with girdling gold,
 Seems all at heart anhungered and acold,
 Seems sad at heart and loveless of the light,
 As night, star clothed or naked, is but night.

And with her sweet eyes sunken, and the mirth
 Dead in their look as earth lies dead in earth
 That reigned on earth and triumphed, Iscalt said:
 'Is it her shame of something done and dead
 Or fear of something to be born and done
 That so in her soul's eye puts out the sun?'

And Tristram answered 'Surely, as I think,
 This gives her soul such bitterness to drink,
 The sin born blind, the sightless sin unknown,
 Wrought when the summer in her blood was blown,
 But scarce aflower, and spring first flushed her will
 With bloom of dreams no fruitage should fulfil,
 When out of vision and desire was wrought
 The sudden sin that from the living thought
 Leaps a live deed and dies not then there came
 On that blind sin swift eyesight like a flame
 Touching the dark to death, and made her mad
 With helpless knowledge that too late forbade

What was before the bidding ; and she knew
How sore a life dead love should lead her through
To what sure end how fearful ; and though yet
Nor with her blood nor tears her way be wet
And she look bravely with set face on fate,
Yet she knows well the serpent hour at wait
Somewhere to sting and spare not ; ay, and he,
Arthur'—

‘The king,’ quoth Iseult suddenly,
‘Doth the king too live so in sight of fear?
They say sin touches not a man so near
As shame a woman ; yet he too should be
Part of the penance, being more deep than she
Set in the sin.’

‘Nay,’ Tristram said, ‘for thus
It fell by wicked hap and hazardous,
That wittingly he sinned no more than youth
May sin and be assoiled of God and truth,
Repenting ; since in his first year of reign
As he stood splendid with his foemen slain
And light of new-blown battles, flushed and hot
With hope and life, came greeting from King Lot
Out of his wind-worn islands oversea,
And homage to my king and fealty
Of those north seas wherein the strange shapes swim,
As from his man ; and Arthur greeted him
As his good lord and courteously, and bade
To his high feast ; who coming with him had
This Queen Morgause of Orkney, his fair wife,
In the green middle Maytime of her life,

And scarce in April was our king's as then,
 And goodliest was he of all flowering men,
 And of what graft as yet himself knew not,
 But cold as rains in autumn was King Lot
 And grey grown out of season so there sprang
 Swift love between them, and all spring through sang
 Light in their joyous hearing, for none knew
 The bitter bond of blood between them two,
 Twain fathers but one mother, till too late
 The sacred mouth of Merlin set forth fate
 And brake the secret seal on Arthur's birth,
 And showed his run and his role on earth
 Inextricable, and light on lives to be.
 For surely, though time slay us, yet shall we
 Have such high name and lordship of good days
 As shall sustain us living, and men's praise
 Shall burn a beacon lit above us dead.
 And of the king how shall not this be said
 When any of us from any mouth has praise,
 That such were men in only this king's days,
 In Arthur's? yea, come shine or shade, no less
 His name shall be one name with agelessness,
 His fame one light with sunlight. Yet in sooth
 His age shall bear the burdens of his youth
 And bleed from his own bloodshed, for indeed
 Blind to him blind his sister brought forth seed,
 And of the child between them shall be born
 Destruction so shall God not suffer scorn,
 Nor in men's souls and lives his law be dead.
 And as one moved and marvelling Iseult said.

'Great pity it is and strange it seems to me
God could not do them so much right as we,
Who slay not men for witless evil done ;
And these the noblest under God's glad sun
For sin they knew not he that knew shall slay,
And smite blind men for stumbling in fair day.
What good is it to God that such should die?
Shall the sun's light grow sunnier in the sky
Because their light of spirit is clean put out?'

And sighing, she looked from wave to cloud about,
And even with that the full-grown feet of day
Sprang upright on the quivering water-way,
And his face burned against her meeting face
Most like a lover's thrilled with great love's grace
Whose glance takes fire and gives ; the quick sea
shone

And shivered like spread wings of angels blown
By the sun's breath before him ; and a low
Sweet gale shook all the foam-flowers of thin snow
As into rainfall of sea-roses shed
Leaf by wild leaf on that green garden-bed
Which tempests till and sea-winds turn and plough .
For rosy and fiery round the running prow
Fluttered the flakes and feathers of the spray,
And bloomed like blossoms cast by God away
To waste on the ardent water ; swift the moon
Withered to westward as a face in swoon
Death-stricken by glad tidings : and the height
Throbbled and the centre quivered with delight

And the depth quailed with passion as of love,
 Till like the heart of some new mated dove
 Air, light, and wave seemed full of burning rest,
 With motion as of one God's beating breast.

And her heart sprang in Iscalt, and she drew
 With all her spirit and life the sunrise through,
 And through her lips the keen triumphant air
 Sea-scented, sweeter than land roses were,
 And through her eyes the whole rejoicing east
 Sun-satisfied, and all the heaven at feast
 Spread for the morning, and the imperious mirth
 Of wind and light that moved upon the earth,
 Making the spring, and all the fruitful might
 And strong regeneration of delight
 That swells the seedling leaf and sapling man,
 Since the first life in the first world began
 To burn and burgeon through void limbs and veins,
 And the first love with sharp sweet procreant pains
 To pierce and bring forth roses, yea, she felt
 Through her own soul the sovereign morning melt,
 And all the sacred passion of the sun,
 And as the young clouds flamed and were undone
 About him coming, touched and burnt away
 In rosy run and yellow spoil of day,
 The sweet veil of her body and corporal sense
 Felt the dawn also cleave it, and incense
 With light from inward and with effluent heat
 The kindling soul through fleshly hands and feet
 And as the august great blossom of the dawn
 Burst, and the full sun scarce from sea withdrawn

Seemed on the fiery water a flower afloat,
So as a fire the mighty morning smote
Throughout her, and incensed with the influent hour
Her whole soul's one great mystical red flower
Burst, and the bud of her sweet spirit broke
Rose-fashion, and the strong spring at a stroke
Thrilled, and was cloven, and from the full sheath
came

The whole rose of the woman red as flame :
And all her Mayday blood as from a swoon
Flushed, and May rose up in her and was June.
So for a space her heart as heavenward burned :
Then with half summer in her eyes she turned,
And on her lips was April yet, and smiled,
As though the spirit and sense unreconciled
Shrank laughing back, and would not ere its hour
Let life put forth the irrevocable flower.

And the soft speech between them grew again
With questionings and records of what men
Rose mightiest, and what names for love or fight
Shone starriest overhead of queen or knight.
There Tristram spake of many a noble thing,
High feast and storm of tourney round the king,
Strange quest by perilous lands of marsh and brake
And circling woods branch-knotted like a snake
And places pale with sins that they had seen
Where was no life of red fruit or of green
But all was as a dead face wan and dun ;
And bowers of evil builders whence the sun

Turns silent, and the moon holds hardly light
 Above them through the sick and star-crossed night,
 And of their hands through whom such holds lay
 waste,

And all their strengths dishevelled and defaced
 Fell ruinous, and were not from north to south
 And of the might of Merlin's ancient mouth,
 The son of no man's loins, begot by doom
 In speechless sleep out of a spotless womb,
 For sleeping among graves where none had rest
 And ominous houses of dead bones unblest
 Among the grey grass rough as old rent hair
 And wicked herbage whitening like despair
 And blown upon with blasts of dolorous breath
 From gaunt rare gaps and hollow doors of death,
 A maid unspotted, senseless of the spell,
 Felt not about her breathe some thing of hell
 Whose child and hers was Merlin, and to him
 Great light from God gave sight of all things dim
 And wisdom of all wondrous things, to say
 What root should bear what fruit of night or day,
 And sovereign speech and counsel higher *than man*,
 Wherefore his youth like age was wise and wan,
 And his age sorrowful and fain to sleep,
 Yet should sleep never, neither laugh nor weep,
 Till in some depth of deep sweet land or sea
 The heavenly hands of holier Nimue,
 That was the nurse of Lancelot, and most sweet
 Of all that move with magical soft feet

Among us, being of lovelier blood and breath,
Should shut him in with sleep as kind as death :
For she could pass between the quick and dead :
And of her love toward Pelleas, for whose head
Love-wounded and world-wearied she had won
A place beyond all pain in Avalon ;
And of the fire that wasted afterward
The loveless eyes and bosom of Ettarde,
In whose false love his faultless heart had burned ;
And now being rapt from her, her lost heart yearned
To seek him, and passed hungering out of life :
And after all the thunder-hours of strife
That roared between King Claudas and King Ban
How Nimue's mighty nursling waxed to man,
And how from his first field such grace he got
That all men's hearts bowed down to Launcelot,
And how the high prince Galahault held him dear
And led him even to love of Guenevere
And to that kiss which made break forth as fire
The laugh that was the flower of his desire,
The laugh that lightened at her lips for bliss
To win from Love so great a lover's kiss :
And of the toil of Balen all his days
To reap but thorns for fruit and tears for praise,
Whose hap was evil as his heart was good,
And all his works and ways by wold and wood
Led through much pain to one last labouring day
When blood for tears washed grief with life away :
And of the kin of Arthur, and their might ;
The misborn head of Mordred, sad as night,

With cold was'e cheeks and eyes as keen as pain,
 And the close angry lips of Agravaine ,
 And gracious Gawain, scattering words as flowers,
 The kindest head of worldly paramours ,
 And the fair hand of Gareth, found in fight
 Strong as a sea beast's tusches and as white ,
 And of the king's self, glorious yet and glad
 For all the toil and doubt of doom he had,
 Clothed with men's loves and full of kingly days.

Then Iseult said ' Let each knight have his praise
 And each good man good witness of his worth ,
 But when men laud the second name on earth,
 Whom would they praise to have no worldly peer
 Save him whose love makes glorious Guenevere ? '

' Nay,' Tristram said, ' such man as he is none.'

' What,' said she, ' there is none such under sun
 Of all the large earth's living? yet I deemed
 Men spake of one—but maybe men that dreamed,
 Fools and tongue-stricken, witless, babblers' breed—
 That for all high things was his peer indeed
 Save this one highest, to be so loved and love.'

And Tristram ' Little we had these thereof ,
 For there is none such in the world as this.'

' Ay, upon land,' quoth Iseult ' none such is,
 I doubt not, nor where fighting folk may be ,
 But were there none such between sky and sea,
 The world's whole worth were poorer than I wist '

And Tristram took her flower white hand and kissed,
 Laughing , and through his fair face as in shame
 The light blood lightened. ' Hear they no such name ? '

She said ; and he, ' If there be such a word,
I wot the queen's poor harper hath not heard.'
Then, as the fuller-feathered hours grew long,
He hopped to speed their warm slow feet with song.

' Love, is it morning risen or night deceased
That makes the mirth of this triumphant east ?
Is it bliss given or bitterness put by
That makes most glad men's hearts at love's high feast ?
Grief smiles, joy weeps, that day should live and die.

' Is it with soul's thirst or with body's drouth
That summer yearns out sunward to the south.
With all the flowers that when thy birth drew nigh
Were molten in one rose to make thy mouth ?
O love, what care though day should live and die ?

' Is the sun glad of all the love on earth,
The spirit and sense and work of things and worth ?
Is the moon sad because the month must fly
And bring her death that can but bring back birth ?
For all these things as day must live and die.

' Love, is it day that makes thee thy delight
Or thou that seest day made out of thy light ?
Love, as the sun and sea are thou and I,
Sea without sun dark, sun without sea bright ;
The sun is one though day should live and die.

' O, which is elder, night or light, who knows ?
And life or love, which first of these twain grows ?
For life is born of love to wail and cry,
And love is born of life to heal his woes,
And light of night, that day should live and die.

O sun of heaven above the worldly sea,
O very love, what light is this of thee !
My sea of soul is deep as thou art high,
But all thy light is shed through all of me,
As love's through love, while day shall live and die,'

'Nay,' said Iscult, 'your song is hard to read.'

'Ay?' said he 'or too light a song to heed,
Too slight to follow, it may be? Who shall sing
Of love but as a churl before a king
If by love's worth men rate his worthiness?
Yet as the poor churl's worth to sing is less,
Surely the more shall be the great king's grace
To show for churlish love a kinder face.'

'No churl,' she said, 'but one in soothsayer's wise
Who tells but truths that help no more than lies
I have heard men sing of love a sampler way
Than these wrought riddles made of night and day,
Like jewell'd reins whereon the rhyme bells hang'

And Tristram smiled and changed his song and sang

'The breath between my lips of lips not mine,
Like spirit in sense that makes pure sense divine,
Is as life in them from the living thy
That entering fills my heart with blood of thine
And thee with me, while day shall live and die

'Thy soul is shed into me with thy breath,
And in my heart each heartbeat of thee saith
How in thy life the lifespings of me lie
Even one life to be gathered of one death
In me and thee, though day may live and die.

'Ah, who knows now if in my veins it be
My blood that feels life sweet, or blood of thee,
And thus thine eyesight kindled in mine eye
That shows me in thy flesh the soul of me,
For thine made mine, while day may live and die?

'Ah, who knows yet if one be twain or one,
And sun and I separable again from sun,
And I from thee with all my lifespings dry,
And thou from me with all thine heartbeats done,
Dead separate souls while day shall live and die?

' I see my soul within thine eyes, and hear
My spirit in all thy pulses thrill with fear,
And in my lips the passion of thee sigh,
And music of me made in mine own ear ;
Am I not thou while day shall live and die ?

' Art thou not I as I thy love am thou ?
So let all things pass from us ; we are now,
For all that was and will be, who knows why ?
And all that is and is not, who knows how ?
Who knows ? God knows why day should live and die.'

And Iseult mused and spake no word, but sought
Through all the hushed ways of her tongueless thought
What face or covered likeness of a face
In what veiled hour or dream-determined place
She seeing might take for love's face, and believe
This was the spirit to whom all spirits cleave.
For that sweet wonder of the twain made one
And each one twain, incorporate sun with sun,
Star with star molten, soul with soul imbued,
And all the soul's works, all their multitude,
Made one thought and one vision and one song,
Love—this thing, this, laid hand on her so strong
She could not choose but yearn till she should see.
So went she musing down her thoughts ; but he,
Sweet-hearted as a bird that takes the sun
With clear strong eyes, and feels the glad god run
Bright through his blood and wide rejoicing wings,
And opens all himself to heaven and sings,
Made her mind light and full of noble mirth
With words and songs the gladdest grown on earth,

36 *THE SAILING OF THE SWALLOW*

Till she was blithe and high of heart as he
 So swam the Swallow through the springing sea
 And while they sat at speech as at a feast,
 Came a light wind fast hardening forth of the east
 And blackening till its might had started the skies,
 And the sea thrilled as with heart sundering a ghast
 One after one drawn, with each breath it drew,
 And the green hardened into iron blue,
 And the soft light went out of all its face.
 Then Tristram girt him for an earman's place
 And took his oar and smote, and toiled with might
 In the east wind's full face and the strong sea's spite
 Labouring, and all the rowers rowed hard, but he
 More mightily than any weaker three.
 And Isolt watched him rowing with sunless eyes
 That loved him but in holy gulf he was
 For noble joy in his fair manliness
 And trust and tender worder, none the less
 She thought if God had given her grace to be
 Man, and make war on danger of earth and sea,
 Even such a man she would be, for his stroke
 Was mightiest as the mightiest water broke,
 And in sheer measure like strong music drove
 Clean through the wet weight of the wallowing wave,
 And as a tune before a great king played
 For triumph was the tune their strong strokes made,
 And sped the ship through with smooth stride of oars
 Over the mad sea's grey foam-paven floors,
 For all the loud breach of the waves at will
 So for an hour they fought the storm out still,

And the shorn foam spun from the blades, and high
The keel sprang from the wave-ridge, and the sky
Glared at them for a breath's space through the rain ;
Then the bows with a sharp shock plunged again
Down, and the sea clashed on them, and so rose
The bright stem like one panting from swift blows,
And as a swimmer's joyous beaten head
Rears itself laughing, so in that sharp stead
The light ship lifted her long quivering bows
As might the man his buffeted strong brows
Out of the wave-breach ; for with one stroke yet
Went all men's oars together, strongly set
As to loud music, and with hearts uplift
They smote their strong way through the drench and
drift.

Till the keen hour had chafed itself to death
And the east wind fell fitfully, breath by breath,
Tired ; and across the thin and slackening rain
Sprang the face southward of the sun again.
Then all they rested and were eased at heart ;
And Iseult rose up where she sat apart,
And with her sweet soul deepening her deep eyes
Cast the furs from her and subtle embroideries
That wrapped her from the storming rain and spray,
And shining like all April in one day,
Hair, face, and throat dashed with the straying
showers,

She stood the first of all the whole world's flowers,
And laughed on Tristram with her eyes, and said,
' I too have heart then, I was not afraid.'

And answering some light courteous word of grace
 He saw her clear face lighten on his face
 Unwittingly, with unenamoured eyes,
 For the last time. A live man in such wise
 Looks in the deadly face of his fixed hour
 And laughs with lips wherein he hath no power
 To keep the life yet some five minutes' space.
 So Tristram looked on Iseult face to face
 And knew not, and she knew not. The last time—
 The last that should be told in any rhyme
 Heard anywhere on mouths of singing men
 That ever should sing praise of them again ,
 The last hour of their hurtless hearts at rest,
 The last that peace should touch them breast to
 breast,

The last that sorrow far from them should sit,
 This last was with them, and they knew not it.

For Tristram being athirst with toil now spake,
 Saying, ' Iseult, for all dear love's labour's sake
 Give me to drink, and give me for a pledge
 The touch of four lips on the beaker's edge.'
 And Iseult sought and would not wake Brangwain
 Who slept as one half dead with fear and pain,
 Being tender natured , so with hushed light feet
 Went Iseult round her, with soft looks and sweet
 Pitying her pain , so sweet a spured thing
 She was, and daughter of a kindly king
 And spying what strange bright secret charge was
 kept

Fast in that maid's white bosom while she slept,

She sought and drew the gold cup forth and smiled
Marvelling, with such light wonder as a child
That hears of glad sad life in magic lands ;
And bare it back to Tristram with pure hands
Holding the love-draught that should be for flame
To burn out of them fear and faith and shame,
And lighten all their life up in men's sight,
And make them sad for ever. Then the knight
Bowed toward her and craved whence had she this
strange thing

That might be spoil of some dim Asian king,
By starlight stolen from some waste place of sands,
And a maid bore it here in harmless hands.
And Iseult, laughing—' Other lords that be
Feast, and their men feast after them ; but we,
Our men must keep the best wine back to feast
Till they be full and we of all men least
Feed after them and fain to fare so well :
So with mine handmaid and your squire it fell
That hid this bright thing from us in a wile :'
And with light lips yet full of their swift smile
And hands that wist not though they dug a grave,
Undid the hasps of gold, and drank, and gave,
And he drank after, a deep glad kingly draught :
And all their life changed in them, for they quaffed
Death ; if it be death so to drink, and fare
As men who change and are what these twain were.
And shuddering with eyes full of fear and fire
And heart-stung with a serpentine desire

40 *THE SAILING OF THE SWALLOW.*

He turned and saw the terror in her eyes
That yearned upon him shining in such wise
As a star midway in the midnight fixed.

 Their Galahault was the cup, and she that mixed,
Nor other hand there needed, nor sweet speech
To lure their lips together , each on each
Hung with strange eyes and hovered as a bird
Wounded, and each mouth trembled for a word ,
Their heads neared, and their hands were drawn in
 one,

And they saw dark, though still the unsunken sun
Far through fine rain shot fire into the south ,
And their four lips became one burning mouth.

II

THE QUEEN'S PLEASANCE.

Out of the night arose the second day,
 And saw the ship's bows break the shoreward spray.
 As the sun's boat of gold and fire began
 To sail the sea of heaven unsailed of man,
 And the soft waves of sacred air to break
 Round the prow launched into the morning's lake,
 They saw the sign of their sea-travel done.

Ah, was not something seen of yester-sun,
 When the sweet light that lightened all the skies
 Saw nothing fairer than one maiden's eyes,
 That whatsoever in all time's years may be
 To-day's sun nor to-morrow's sun shall see?
 Not while she lives, not when she comes to die
 Shall she look sunward with that sinless eye.

Yet fairer now than song may show them stand
 Tristram and Iseult, hand in amorous hand,
 Soul-satisfied, their eyes made great and bright
 With all the love of all the livelong night ;
 With all its hours yet singing in their ears

No mortal music made of thoughts and tears,
But such a song, past conscience of man's thought,
As hearing he grows god and knows it not.
Nought else they saw nor heard but what the night
Had left for seal upon their sense and sight,
Sound of past pulses beating, fire of amorous light.
Enough, and overmuch, and never yet
Enough, though love still hungering feed and fret,
To fill the cup of night which dawn must overset.
For still their eyes were *dimmer* than with tears
And *dizzer* from diviner sounds their ears
Than though from choral thunders of the quiring
spheres.

They heard not how the landward waters rang,
Nor saw where high into the morning sprang,
Riven from the shore and bastioned with the sea,
Toward summits where the north wind's nest might be,
A wave-walled palace with its eastern gate
Full of the sunrise now and wide at wait,
And on the mighty moulded stairs that clomb
Sheer from the fierce lip of the lapping foam
The knights of Mark that stood before the wall.
So with loud joy and storm of festival
They brought the bride in up the tovery way
That rose again at the rising front of day,
Stair based on stair, between the rocks cleft,
To those strange halls wherethrough the tidal tune
Rang loud or lower from soft or strengthening sea,
Tower shouldering tower, to windward and to lee,

With change of floors and stories, flight on flight,
That clomb and curled up to the crowning height
Whence men might see wide east and west in one
And on one sea waned moon and mounting sun.
And severed from the sea-rock's base, where stand
Some worn walls yet, they saw the broken strand,
The beachless cliff that in the sheer sea dips,
The sleepless shore inexorable to ships,
And the straight causeway's bare gaunt spine between
The sea-spanned walls and naked mainland's green.

On the mid stairs, between the light and dark,
Before the main tower's portal stood King Mark,
Crowned : and his face was as the face of one
Long time athirst and hungering for the sun
In barren thrall of bitter bonds, who now
Thinks here to feel its blessing on his brow.
A swart lean man, but kinglike, still of guise,
With black streaked beard and cold unquiet eyes,
Close-mouthed, gaunt-cheeked, wan as a morning
moon,

Though hardly time on his worn hair had strewn
The thin first ashes from a sparing hand :
Yet little fire there burnt upon the brand,
And way-worn seemed he with life's wayfaring.
So between shade and sunlight stood the king,
And his face changed nor yearned not toward his bride;
But fixed between mild hope and patient pride
Abode what gift of rare or lesser worth
This day might bring to all his days on earth.

But at the glory of her when she came
His heart endured not very fear and shame
Smote him, to take her by the hand and kiss,
Till both were molten in the burning bliss,
And with a thin flame flushing his cold face
He led her silent to the bridal place
There were they wed and hallowed of the priest,
And all the loud time of the marriage feast
One thought within three hearts was as a fire,
Where craft and faith took counsel with desire.
For when the feast had made a glorious end
They gave the new queen for her maids to tend
At dawn of bride night, and thereafter bring
With marriage music to the bridegroom king.
Then by device of craft between them laid
To him went Brangwain delicately, and prayed
That this thing even for love's sake might not be,
But without sound or light or eye to see
She might come in to bride bed and he laughed,
As one that wist not well of wise love's craft,
And bade all bridal things be as he would,
Yet of his gentleness he gat not good,
For clothed and covered with the nuptial dark
Soft like a bride came Brangwain to King Mark,
And to the queen came Tristram, and the night
Fled, and ere danger of detective light
From the king sleeping Brangwain slid away,
And where had lain her handmaid Iseult lay
And the king waking saw beside his head
That face yet passion-coloured, amorous red

From lips not his, and all that strange hair shed
 Across the tissued pillows, fold on fold,
 Innumerable, incomparable, all gold,
 To fire men's eyes with wonder, and with love
 Men's hearts ; so shone its flowering crown above
 The brows enwound with that imperial wreath,
 And framed with fragrant radiance round the face
 beneath.

And the king marvelled, seeing with sudden start
 Her very glory, and said out of his heart ;
 'What have I done of good for God to bless
 That all this he should give me, tress on tress,
 All this great wealth and wondrous ? Was it this
 That in mine arms I had all night to kiss,
 And mix with me this beauty ? this that seems
 More fair than heaven doth in some tired saint's
 dreams,

Being part of that same heaven ? yea, more, for he,
 Though loved of God so, yet but seems to see,
 But to me sinful such great grace is given
 That in mine hands I hold this part of heaven
 Not to mine eyes lent merely. Doth God make
 Such things so godlike for man's mortal sake ?
 Have I not sinned, that in this fleshly life
 Have made of her a mere man's very wife ?'

So the king mused and murmured ; and she heard
 The faint sound trembling of each breathless word
 And laughed into the covering of her hair.

And many a day for many a month as fair
 Slid over them like music ; and as bright
 Burned with love's offerings many a secret night.

And many a dawn to many a fiery noon
Blew prelude, when the horn's heart kindling tune
Lut the live woods with sovereign sound of mirth
Before the mightiest huntsman hailed on earth
Lord of its lordliest pleasure, where he rode
Hard by her rein whose peerless presence glowed
Not as that white queen's of the virgin hunt
Once, whose crown crescent braves the night wind's
 brunt,

But with the sun for frontlet of a queenlier front
For where the flashing of her face was turned
As lightning was the fiery light that burned
From eyes and brows enkindled more with speed
And rapture of the rushing of her steed
Than once with only beauty, and her mouth
Was as a rose athirst that pants for drouth
Even while it laughs for pleasure of desire,
And all her heart was as a leaping fire.
Yet once more joy they took of woodland ways
Than came of all those flushed and fiery days
When the loud air was mad with life and sound,
Through many a dense green mile, of horn and hound
Before the king's hunt going along the wind,
And ere the timely leaves were changed or thinned,
Even in mad maze of summer For the knight
Forth was once ridden toward some frontier fight
Against the lewd folk of the Christless lands
That warred with wild and intermittent hands
Against the king's north border and there came
A knight unchristened yet of unknown name,

Swart Palamede, upon a secret quest,
To high Tintagel, and abode as guest
In likeness of a minstrel with the king.
Nor was there man could sound so sweet a string,
Save Tristram only, of all held best on earth.
And one loud eve, being full of wine and mirth,
Ere sunset left the walls and waters dark,
To that strange minstrel strongly swore King Mark,
By all that makes a knight's faith firm and strong,
That he for guerdon of his harp and song
Might crave and have his liking. Straight there came
Up the swart cheek a flash of swarthier flame,
And the deep eyes fulfilled of glittering night
Laughed out in lightnings of triumphant light
As the grim harper spake : ' O king, I crave
No gift of man that king may give to slave,
But this thy crowned queen only, this thy wife,
Whom yet unseen I loved, and set my life
On this poor chance to compass, even as here,
Being fairer famed than all save Guenevere.'
Then as the noise of seaward storm that mocks
With roaring laughter from reverberate rocks
The cry from ships near shipwreck, harsh and high
Rose all the wrath and wonder in one cry
Through all the long roof's hollow depth and length
That hearts of strong men kindled in their strength
May speak in laughter lion-like, and cease,
Being wearied : only two men held their peace
And each glared hard on other : but King Mark
Spake first of these : ' Man, though thy craft be dark

And thy mind evil that begat this thing,
Yet stands the word once plighted of a king
Fast and albeit less evil it were for me
To give my life up than my wife, or he
A landless man crowned only with a curse,
Yet this in God's and all men's sight were worse,
To live soul shamed, a man of broken troth,
Abhorred of men as I abhor mine oath
Which yet I may forswear not.' And he bowed
His head, and wept and all men wept aloud,
Save one, that heard him weeping but the queen
Wept not and 'tatchier yet than eyes had seen'
That ever looked upon her queenly state
She rose, and in her eyes her heart was great
And full of wrath seen manifest and scorn
More strong than anguish to go thence forlorn
Of all men's comfort and her natural right,
And they went forth into the dawn of night.
Long by wild ways and clouded light they rode,
Silent, and fear less keen at heart abode
With Iseult than with Palamede for awe
Constrained him, and the might of love's high law,
That can make lewd men loyal, and his heart
Yearned on her, if perchance with amorous art
And soothfast skill of very love he might
For courtesy find favour in her sight
And comfort of her mercies for he wist
More grace might come of that sweet mouth un-kissed
Than joy for violence done it, that should make
His name abhorred for shame's disloyal sake

And in the stormy starlight clouds were thinned
And thickened by short gusts of changing wind
That panted like a sick man's fitful breath:
And like a moan of lions hurt to death
Came the sea's hollow noise along the night.
But ere its gloom from aught but foam had light
They halted, being aweary : and the knight
As reverently forbore her where she lay
As one that watched his sister's sleep till day.
Nor durst he kiss or touch her hand or hair
For love and shamefast pity, seeing how fair
She slept, and fenceless from the fitful air.
And shame at heart stung nigh to death desire,
But grief at heart burned in him like a fire
For hers and his own sorrowing sake, that had
Such grace for guerdon as makes glad men sad,
To have their will and want it. And the day
Sprang : and afar along the wild waste way
They heard the pulse and press of hurrying horse
hoofs play :

And like the rushing of a ravenous flame
Whose wings make tempest of the darkness, came
Upon them headlong as in thunder borne
Forth of the darkness of the labouring morn
Tristram: and up forthright upon his steed
Leapt, as one blithe of battle, Palamede,
And mightily with shock of horse and man
They lashed together : and fair that fight began
As fair came up that sunrise : to and fro,
With knees nigh staggered and stout heads bent low

From each quick shock of spears on either side,
 Reel'd the strong, steeds heavily, haggard-eyed
 And heartened high with passion of their pride
 As shiver the stout spears shocked again, and flew
 Sharps, lancing then, his sword as each kr, b' drew.
 They flash'd and found full rivalry, so long
 That but to see so fair a strife and strong
 A man might well have given out of his life
 One year's road space for him of love or strife
 As when a bright north easter great of heart,
 Scatter'd the strengths of squadrons, hur'd apart
 Ship from ship labouring violently, in such toil
 As earns but ruin—with even so strong recoil
 Back were the steed, hur'd from the spear-shock, hur'd
 And so led of triumph—then with ug' ened rean
 And stroke of spur, inveterate, either knight
 Bore in again upon his foe with might,
 Heart hungry for the hot mouth'd feast of fight
 And all athirst of mastery—but full soon
 The jarring notes of that tempestuous tune
 Fell, and its mighty iron made of hands
 Contending, clamorous through the loud waste lands
 Broke at once off, and shattered from his steed
 Fell, as a mainmast running, Palamede,
 Stunned—and those lovers left him where he lay,
 And lightly through green lawns they rode away
 There was a holer beyond man's eye more fair
 Than ever summer dews and sunniest air
 Fed full with rest and radiance till the boughs
 Had wrought a roof as for a holer house

And under charge of sun and star and moon
 Flourished and fell the chaplets woven of June,
 And fur through fervours of the deepening sky
 Panted and passed the hours that lit July,
 And each day blessed them out of heaven above,
 And each night crowned them with the crown of love.
 Nor till the night of August overhead
 Weighed on the world was yet one roveleaf shed
 Of all their joys warm coronal, nor aught
 Touched them in passing ever with a thought
 That ever this might end on any day
 Or any night not love them where they lay,
 But like a babbling tale of barren breath
 Seemed all report and rumour held of death,
 And a false brut the legend tear unpearled
 That such a thing as change was in the world.
 And each bright song upon his lips that came,
 Mocking the powers of change and death by name,
 Blasphemed their bitter godhead, and denied
 Time, though clothed round with ruin as kings with
 pride,
 To blot the glad life out of love and the
 Drank lightly deep of his philosophy
 In that warm wine of amorous words which is
 Sweet with all truths of all philosophies,
 For well he wist all subtle ways of song,
 And in his soul the secret eye was strong
 That burns in meditation, till bright words
 Break flamelike forth as notes from fledgeless birds

That feel the soul speak through them of the spring.
So fared they night and day as queen and king
Crowned of a kingdom wide as day and night.
Nor ever cloudlet swept or swam in sight
Across the darkling depths of their delight
Whose stars no skill might number, nor man's art
Sound the deep stories of its heavenly heart.
Till, even for wonder that such life should live,
Desires and dreams of what death's self might give
Would touch with tears and laughter and wild speech
The lips and eyes of passion, fain to reach,
Beyond all bourne of time or trembling sense,
The verge of love's last possible eminence.
Out of the heaven that storm nor shadow mars,
Deep from the starry depth beyond the stars,
A yearning ardour without scope or name
Fell on them, and the bright night's breath of flame
Shot fire into their kisses ; and like fire
The lit dew's lightened on the leaves, as higher
Night's heart beat on toward midnight. Far and fain
Somewhiles the soft rush of rejoicing rain
Solaced the darkness, and from steep to steep
Of heaven they saw the sweet sheet lightning leap
And laugh its heart out in a thousand smiles,
When the clear sea for miles on glimmering miles
Burned as though dawn were strewn abroad astray,
Or, showering out of heaven, all heaven's array
Had paven instead the waters : fain and far
Somewhiles the burning love of star for star

Spake words that love might wellough seem to hear
 In such deep hours as turn delight to fear
 Sweet as delight's self ever So they lay
 Tranced once, nor watched along the fiery bay
 The shine of summer darkness palpitate and play
 She had nor sight nor voice, her swooning eyes
 Knew not if night or light were in the skies,
 Across her beauty sheer the moondawn shed
 Its light as on a thing as white and dead,
 Only with stress of soft fierce hands she prest
 Between the throbbing blossoms of her breast
 His ardent face, and through his hair her breath
 Went quivering as when life is hard on death,
 And with strong trembling fingers she strained fast
 His head into her bosom, till at last,
 Sate with sweetness of that burning bed,
 His eyes afire with tears, he raised his head
 And laughed into her lips, and all his heart
 Filled hers, then face from face fell, and apart
 Each hung on each with panting lips, and felt
 Sense into sense and spurt in spurt melt.

'Hast thou no sword? I would not live till day,
 O love, this night and we must pass away,
 It must die soon, and let not us die late'

'Take then my sword and slay me, nay, but wait
 Till day be risen, what, wouldst thou think to die
 Before the light take hold upon the sky?'

'Yea, love, for how shall we have twice, being
 twain,

This very night of love's most rapturous reign?

Live thou and have thy day, and year by year
Be great, but what shall I be? Slay me here;
Let me die not when love lies dead, but now
Strike through my heart : nay, sweet, what heart hast
thou?

Is it so much I ask thee, and spend my breath
In asking? nay, thou knowest it is but death.
Hadst thou true heart to love me, thou wouldst give
This : but for hate's sake thou wilt let me live.'

Here he caught up her lips with his, and made
The wild prayer silent in her heart that prayed,
And strained her to him till all her faint breath sank
And her bright light limbs palpitated and shrank
And rose and fluctuated as flowers in rain
That bends them and they tremble and rise again
And heave and straighten and quiver all through with
bliss

And turn afresh their mouths up for a kiss,
Amorous, athirst of that sweet influent love;
So, hungering toward his hovering lips above,
Her red-rose mouth yearned silent, and her eyes
Closed, and flashed after, as through June's darkest
skies

The divine heartbeats of the deep live light
Make open and shut the gates of the outer night.

Long lay they still, subdued with love, nor knew
If cloud or light changed colour as it grew,
If star or moon beheld them; if above
The heaven of night waxed fiery with their love,

Or earth beneath were moved at heart and root
To burn as they, to burn and bring forth fruit
Unseasonable for love's sake , if tall trees
Bowed, and close flowers yearned open, and the breeze
Failed and fell silent as a flame that fails
And all that hour unheard the nightingales
Clamoured, and all the woodland soul was stirred,
And depth and height were one great song unheard,
As though the world caught music and took fire
From the instant heart alone of their desire

So sped their night of nights between them so,
For all fears past and shadows, shine and snow,
That one pure hour all golden where they lay
Made their life perfect and their darkness day
And warmer waved its harvest yet to reap,
Till in the lovely fight of love and sleep
At length had sleep the mastery , and the dark
Was lit with soft live gleams they might not mark,
Fleet butterflies, each like a dead flower's ghost,
White, blue, and sere leaf coloured , but the most
White as the sparkle of snow flowers in the sun
Ere with his breath they lie at noon undone
Whose kiss devours their tender beauty, and leaves
But raindrops on the grass and sere thin leaves
That were engraven with traceries of the snow
Flowerwise ere any flower of earth's would blow ,
So swift they sprang and sank, so sweet and light
They swam the deep dim breathless air of night.
Now on her rose white amorous breast half bare,
Now on her slumberous loose-dishevelled hair,

The white wings lit and vanished, and afresh
Lit soft as snow lights on her snow-soft flesh,
On hand or throat or shoulder ; and she stirred
Sleeping, and spake some tremulous bright word,
And laughed upon some dream too sweet for truth,
Yet not so sweet as very love and youth
That there had charmed her eyes to sleep at last.
Nor woke they till the perfect night was past,
And the soft sea thrilled with blind hope of light.
But ere the dusk had well the sun in sight
He turned and kissed her eyes awake and said,
Seeing earth and water neither quick nor dead
And twilight hungering toward the day to be,
'As the dawn loves the sunlight I love thee.'
And even as rays with cloudlets in the skies
Confused in brief love's bright contentious wise,
Sleep strove with sense rekindling in her eyes ;
And as the flush of birth scarce overcame
The pale pure pearl of unborn light with flame
Soft as may touch the rose's heart with shame
To break not all reluctant out of bud,
Stole up her sleeping cheek her waking blood ;
And with the lovely laugh of love that takes
The whole soul prisoner ere the whole sense wakes,
Her lips for love's sake bade love's will be done.
And all the sea lay subject to the sun.

III.

TRISTRAM IN BRITTANY.

“As the dawn loves the sunlight I love thee ;”
 As men that shall be swallowed of the sea
 Love the sea's lovely beauty ; as the night
 That wanes before it loves the young sweet light.
 And dies of loving ; as the worn-out noon
 Loves twilight, and as twilight loves the moon
 That on its grave a silver seal shall set—
 We have loved and slain each other, and love yet.
 Slain ; for we live not surely, being in twain :
 In her I lived, and in me she is slain,
 Who loved me that I brought her to her doom,
 Who loved her that her love might be my tomb.
 As all the streams on earth and all fresh springs
 And sweetest waters, every brook that sings,
 Each fountain where the young year dips its wings
 First, and the first-fledged branches of it wave,
 Even with one heart's love seek one bitter grave.
 From hills that first see bared the morning's breast
 And heights the sun last years to from the west,

All tend but toward the sea, all born most high
Strive downward, passing all things joyous by,
Seek to it and cast their lives in it and die.
So strive all lives for death which all lives win,
So sought her soul to my soul, and therein
Was poured and perished O my love, and mine
Sought to thee and died of thee and died as thine.
As the dawn loves the sunlight that must cease
Ere dawn again may rise and pass in peace,
Must die that she being dead may live again,
To be by his new rising nearly slain.
So rolls the great wheel of the great world round,
And no change in it and no fault is found,
And no true life of perdurable breath,
And surely no irrevocable death.
Day after day night comes that day may break,
And day comes back for night's reiterate sake.
Each into each dies, each of each is born
Day past is night, shall night past not be morn?
Out of this moonless and faint hearted night
That love yet lives in, shall there not be light?
Light strong as love, that love may live in yet?
Alas, but how shall foolish hope forget
How all these loving things that kill and die
Meet not but for a breath's space and pass by?
Night is used once of dawn and dies, and day
But touches twilight and is rapt away
So may my love and her love meet once more,
And meeting be divided as of yore.

Yea, surely as the day-star loves the sun
And when he hath risen is utterly undone,
So is my love of her and hers of me—
And its most sweetness bitter as the sea.
Would God yet dawn might see the sun and die !'

Three years had looked on earth and passed it by
Since Tristram looked on Iscult, when he stood
So communing with dreams of evil and good,
And let all sad thoughts through his spirit sweep
As leaves through air or tears through eyes that weep
Or snowflakes through dark weather : and his soul,
That had seen all those sightless seasons roll
One after one, wave over weary wave,
Was in him as a corpse is in its grave.
Yet, for his heart was mighty, and his might
Through all the world as a great sound and light,
The mood was rare upon him ; save that here
In the low sundawn of the lightening year
With all last year's toil and its triumph done
He could not choose but yearn for that set sun
Which at this season saw the firstborn kiss
That made his lady's mouth one fire with his.
Yet his great heart being greater than his grief
Kept all the summer of his strength in leaf
And all the rose of his sweet spirit in flower ;
Still his soul fed upon the sovereign hour
That had been or that should be ; and once more
He looked through drifted sea and drifting shore
That crumbled in the wave-breach, and again
Spake sad and deep within himself : ' What pain

Should make a man's soul wholly break and die,
Sapped as weak sand by water? How shall I
Be less than all less things are that endure
And strive and yield when time is? Nay, full sure
All these and we are parts of one same end,
And if through fire or water we twain tend
To that sure life where both must be made one,
If one we be, what matter? Thou, O sun,
The face of God, if God thou be not—nay,
What but God should I think thee, what should say,
Seeing thee reisen, but very God?—should I,
I fool, rebuke thee sovereign in thy sky,
The clouds dead round thee and the air alive,
The winds that lighten and the waves that strive
Toward this shore as to that beneath thy breath,
Because in me my thoughts bear all towards death?
O sun, that when we are dead wilt rise as bright,
Air deepening up toward heaven, and nameless light,
And heaven immeasurable, and faint clouds blown
Between us and the lowest aërial zone
And each least skirt of their imperial state—
Forgive us that we held ourselves so great!
What should I do to curse you? I indeed
Am a thing meaner than this least wild seed
That my foot bruises and I know not—yet
Would not be mean enough for worms to fret
Before their time and mine was.

‘Ah, and ye
Light washing weeds, blind waifs of dull blind sea,

Do ye so thirst and hunger and aspire,
Are ye so moved with such long strong desire
In the ebb and flow of your sad life, and strive
Still toward some end ye shall not see alive—
But at high noon ye know it by light and heat
Some half-hour, till ye feel the fresh tide beat
Up round you, and at night's most bitter noon
The ripples leave you naked to the moon?
And this dim dusty heather that I tread,
These half-born blossoms, born at once and dead,
Sere brown as funeral cloths, and purple as pall,
What if some life and grief be in them all?

‘Ay, what of these? but, O strong sun! O sea!
I bid not you, divine things! comfort me,
I stand not up to match you in your sight—
Who hath said ye have mercy toward us, ye who have
might?

And though ye had mercy, I think I would not pray
That ye should change your counsel or your way
To make our life less bitter: if such power
Be given the stars on one deciduous hour,
And such might be in planets to destroy
Grief and rebuild, and break and build up joy,
What man would stretch forth hand on them to make
Fate mutable, God foolish, for his sake?
For if in life or death be aught of trust,
And if some unseen just God or unjust
Put soul into the body of natural things
And in time's pauseless feet and worldwide wings

Some spirit of impulse and some sense of will
 That steers them through the seas of good and ill
 To some incognizable and actual end,
 Be it just or unjust, foe to man or friend,
 How should we make the stable spirit to swerve,
 How teach the strong soul of the world to serve,
 The imperious will in time and sense in space
 That gives man life turn back to give man place—
 The conscious law lose conscience of its way,
 The rule and reason fall from night and day,
 The streams flow back toward whence the springs
 began,

That less of thrust might sear the lips of man?
 Let that which is be, and sure strengths stand sure,
 And evil or good and death or life endure,
Not alterable and rootless, but indeed
 A very stem born of a very seed
 That brings forth fruit in season how should this
 Die that was sown, and that not be which is,
 And the old fruit change that came of the ancient
 root,

And he that planted bid it not bear fruit,
 And he that watered smite his vine with drouth
 Because its grapes are bitter in our mouth,
 And he that kindled quench the sun with night
 Because its beams are fire against our sight,
 And he that tuned untune the sounding spheres
 Because their song is thunder in our ears?
 How should the skies change and the stars, and time
 Break the large concord of the years that chime,

Answering, as wave to wave beneath the moon
That draws them shoreward, mar the whole tide's tune
For the instant foam's sake on one turning wave—
For man's sake that is grass upon a grave?
How should the law that knows not soon or late,
For whom no time nor space is—how should fate,
That is not good nor evil, wise nor mad,
Nor just nor unjust, neither glad nor sad—
How should the one thing that hath being, the one
That moves not as the stars move or the sun
Or any shadow or shape that lives or dies
In likeness of dead earth or living skies,
But its own darkness and its proper light
Clothe it with other names than day or night,
And its own soul of strength and spirit of breath
Feed it with other powers than life or death—
How should it turn from its great way to give
Man that must die a clearer space to live?
Why should the waters of the sea be cleft,
The hills be molten to his right and left,
That he from deep to deep might pass dry-shod,
Or look between the viewless heights on God?
Hath he such eyes as, when the shadows flee,
The sun looks out with to salute the sea?
Is his hand bounteous as the morning's hand?
Or where the night stands hath he feet to stand?
Will the storm cry not when he bids it cease?
Is it his voice that saith to the east wind, Peace?
Is his breath mightier than the west wind's breath?
Doth his heart know the things of life and death?

Can his face bring forth sunshine and give rain,
Or his weal will that drea and lives again
Make one thing certain or bind one thing fast,
That as he willed it shall be at the last?
How should the storms of heaven and kindled lights
And all the depths of things and topless heights
And air and earth and fire and water change
Their likeness, and the natural world grow strange,
And all the limits of their life undone
Lose count of time and conscience of the sun,
And that fall under which was fixed above,
That man might have a larger hour for love?'

So musing with close lips and lifted eyes
That smiled with self contempt to live so wise,
With silent heart so hungry now so long,
So late grown clear, so miserably made strong,
About the wolds a banished man he went,
The brown wolds bare and sad as banishment,
By wastes of fruitless flowerage, and grey downs
That felt the sea wind shake their wild flower crowns
As though fierce hands would pluck from some grey
head

The spoils of majesty despised and dead,
And fill with crying and comfortless strange sound
Their hollow sides and heights of herbless ground.
Yet as he went fresh courage on him came,
Till dawn rose too within him as a flame,
The heart of the ancient hills and his were one,
The winds took counsel with him, and the sun

Spake comfort ; in his ears the shout of birds
Was as the sound of clear sweet-spirited words,
The noise of streams as laughter from above
Of the old wild lands, and as a cry of love
Spring's trumpet-blast blown over moor and lea :
The skies were red as love is, and the sea
Was as the floor of heaven for love to tread.
So went he as with light about his head,
And in the joyous travail of the year
Grew April-hearted ; since nor grief nor fear
Can master so a young man's blood so long
That it shall move not to the mounting song
Of that sweet hour when earth replumes her wings
And with fair face and heart set heavenward sings
As an awakened angel unaware
That feels his sleep fall from him, and his hair
By some new breath of wind and music stirred,
Till like the sole song of one heavenly bird
Sounds all the singing of the host of heaven,
And all the glories of the sovereign Seven
Are as one face of one incorporate light.
And as that host of singers in God's sight
Might draw toward one that slumbered, and arouse
The lips requickened and rekindling brows,
So seemed the earthly host of all things born
In sight of spring and eyeshot of the morn,
All births of land or waifs of wind and sea,
To draw toward him that sorrowed, and set free
From presage and remembrance of all pains
The life that leapt and lightened in his veins.

So with no sense abashed nor sunless look,
But with exalted eyes and heart, he took
His part of sun or storm wind, and was glad,
For all things lost, of these good things he had

And the spring loved him surely, being from birth
One made out of the better part of earth,
A man born as at sunrise, one that saw
Not without reverence and sweet sense of awe
But wholly without fear or fiftful breath
The face of life watched by the face of death,
And living took his fill of rest and strife,
Of love and change, and fruit and seed of life,
And when his time to live in light was done
With unbent head would pass out of the sun
A spirit as morning, fair and clear and strong,
Whose thought and work were as one harp and song
Heard through the world as in a strange king's hall
Some great guest a voice that sings of festival
So seemed all things to love him, and his heart
In all their joy of life to take such part,
That with the live earth and the living sea
He was as one that communed mutually
With naked heart to heart of friend to friend;
And the star deepening at the sunset's end,
And the moon fallen before the gate of day
As one sore wearied with vain length of way,
And the winds wandering, and the streams and skies,
As faces of his flows in his eyes
Nor lacked there love where he was evermore
Of man and woman, friend of sea or shore,

Not measurable with weight of graven gold,
 Free as the sun's gift of the world to hold
 Given each day back to man's reconquering sight
 That loses but its lordship for a night.
 And now that after many a season spent
 In barren ways and works of banishment,
 Toil of strange fights and many a fruitless field,
 Ventures of quest and vigils under shield,
 He came back to the strait of sundering sea
 That parts green Cornwall from grey Brittany,
 Where dwelt the high king's daughter of the lands,
 Iseult, named alway from her fair white hands,
 She looked on him and loved him ; but being young
 Made shamefastness a seal upon her tongue,
 And on her heart, that none might hear its cry,
 Set the sweet signet of humility.
 Yet when he came a stranger in her sight,
 A banished man and weary, no such knight
 As when the Swallow dipped her bows in foam
 Steered singing that imperial Iseult home,
 This maiden with her sinless sixteen years
 Full of sweet thoughts and hopes that played at fears
 Cast her eyes on him but in courteous wise,
 And lo, the man's face burned upon her eyes
 As though she had turned them on the naked sun :
 And through her limbs she felt sweet passion run
 As fire that flowed down from her face, and beat
 Soft through stirred veins on even to her hands and
 feet

And away through the rhymes reverberate came
 The virginal soft burden of her name.
 And ere the full song faled upon her ear
 Joy strove within her till it cast out fear,
 And all her heart was as his harp, and rang
 Swift music, made of hope whose birthnote sprang
 Bright in the blood that kindled as he sang

'Stars know not how we call them, nor may flowers
 Know by what happy name the hovering hours
 Bapture their new born heads with dew and flame :
 And Love, adored of all time as of ours,
 Iscalt, knew nought for ages of his name.

'With many tongues men called on him, but he
 Wist not which word of all might worthiest be
 To sound for ever in his ear the same,
 Till heart of man might hear and soul might see,
 Iscalt, the radiance ringing from thy name.

'By many names men called him as the night
 By many a name calls many a starry light
 Her several sovereigns of dividual fame ;
 But day by one name only calls aight,
 Iscalt, the sun that bids men praise his name.

'In many a name of man his name soared high
 And song shone round it soaring, till the sky
 Rang rapture and the world's fast founded frame
 Trembled with sense of triumph even as I,
 Iscalt, with sense of worship at thy name

'In many a name of woman smiled his power
 Incarnate, as all summer in a flower,
 Till winter bring forgetfulness or shame :
 But thine the keystone of his topless tower
 Iscalt, is one with Love's own lordliest name,

'Iseult my love, Iseult my queen twice crowned,
In thee my death, in thee my life lies bound :
Names are there yet that all men's hearts acclaim,
But Love's own heart rings answer to the sound,
Iseult, that bids it bow before thy name.'

There ceased his voice yearning upon the word,
Struck with strong passion dumb : but she that heard
Quailed to the heart, and trembled ere her eyes
Durst let the loving light within them rise,
And yearn on his for answer : yet at last,
Albeit not all her fear was overpast,
Hope, kindling even the frost of fear apace
With sweet fleet bloom and breath of gradual grace,
Flushed in the changing roses of her face.
And ere the strife took truce of white with red,
Or joy for soft shame's sake durst lift up head,
Something she would and would not fain have said,
And wist not what the fluttering word would be,
But rose and reached forth to him her hand : and he,
Heart-stricken, bowed his head and dropped his knee,
And on her fragrant hand his lips were fire ;
And their two hearts were as one trembling lyre
Touched by the keen wind's kiss with brief desire
And music shuddering at its own delight.
So dawned the moonrise of their marriage night.

IV.

THE MAIDEN MARRIAGE.

SPRING watched her last moon burn and fade with
 May

While the days deepened toward a bridal day.
 And on her snowbright hand the ring was set
 While in the maiden's ear the song's word yet
 Hovered, that hailed as love's own queen by name
 Iscult : and in her heart the word was flame ;
 A pulse of light, a breath of tender fire,
 Too dear for doubt, too driftless for desire.
 Between her father's hand and brother's led
 From hall to shrine, from shrine to marriage-bed,
 She saw not how by hap at home-coming
 Fell from her new lord's hand a royal ring,
 Whereon he looked, and felt the pulse astart
 Speak passion in his faith-forsaken heart.
 For this was given him of the hand wherein
 That heart's pledge lay for ever : so the sin
 That should be done if truly he should take
 This maid to wife for strange love's faithless sake

Struck all his mounting spirit abashed, and fear
Fell cold for shame's sake on his changing cheer.
Yea, shame's own fire that burned upon his brow
To bear the brand there of a broken vow
Was frozen again for very fear thereof
That wrung his heart with keener pangs than love.
And all things rose upon him, all things past
Ere last they parted, cloven in twain at last,
Isult from Tristram, Tristram from the queen,
And how men found them in the wild woods green
Sleeping, but sundered by the sword between,
Dividing breast from amorous breast a span,
But scarce in heart the woman from the man
As far as hope from joy or sleep from truth,
And Mark that saw them held for sacred sooth
These were no fleshly lovers, by that sign
That severed them, still s'umbering, so d vine
He deemed it how at waking they beheld
The kirg's folk round the king, and uncompelled
Were fain to follow and fire among them home
Back to the towers washed round with rolling foam
And stoned halls wherethrough sea music rang
And how report thereafter swelled and sprang,
A full mouthed serpent, hissing in men's ears
Word of their loves and one of all his peers
That most he trusted, being his kinsman born,
A man base moulded for the stamp of scorn,
Whose heart with hate was keen and cold and dark,
Gave note by midnight whisper to King Mark

Where he might take them sleeping ; how ere day
Had seen the grim next morning all away
Fast bound they brought him down a weary way
With forty knights about him, and their chief
That traitor who for trust had given him grief,
To the old hoar chapel, like a strait stone tomb
Sheer on the sea-rocks, there to take his doom :
How, seeing he needs must die, he bade them yet
Bethink them if they durst for shame forget
What deeds for Cornwall had he done, and wrought
For all their sake what rescue, when he fought
Against the fierce foul Irish foe that came
To take of them for tribute in their shame
Three hundred heads of children ; whom in fight
His hand redeeming slew Moraunt the knight
That none durst lift his eyes against, not one
Had heart but he, who now had help of none,
To take the battle ; whence great shame it were
To knighthood, yea, foul shame on all men there,
To see him die so shamefully : nor durst
One man look up, nor one make answer first,
Save even the very traitor, who defied
And would have slain him naked in his pride,
But he, that saw the sword plucked forth to slay,
Looked on his hands, and wrenched their bonds
away,
Haling those twain that he went bound between
Suddenly to him, and kindling in his mien
Shone lion-fashion forth with eyes alight,

So Tristram one brief breathing-space apart
Hung, and gazed down ; then with exulting heart
Plunged : and the fleet foam round a joyous head
Flashed, that shot under, and ere a shaft had sped
Rose again radiant, a rejoicing star,
And high along the water-ways afar
Triumphed : and all they deemed he needs must die ;
But Gouvernayle his squire, that watched hard by,
Sought where perchance a man might win ashore,
Striving, with strong limbs labouring long and sore,
And there abode an hour : till as from fight
Crowned with hard conquest won by mastering might,
Hardly, but happier for the imperious toil,
Swam the knight in forth of the close waves' coil,
Sea-satiate, bruised with buffets of the brine,
Laughing, and flushed as one afire with wine :
All this came hard upon him in a breath ;
And how he marvelled in his heart that death
Should be no bitterer than it seemed to be
There, in the strenuous impulse of the sea
Borne as to battle deathward : and at last
How all his after seasons overpast
Had brought him darkling to this dark sweet hour,
Where his foot faltered nigh the bridal bower.
And harder seemed the passage now to pass,
Though smoother-seeming than the still sea's glass,
More fit for very manhood's heart to fear,
Than all straits past of peril. Hardly here
Might aught of all things hearten him save one,
Faith : and as men's eyes quail before the sun

Within the chamber, heavy-eyed : and there
Gleamed the white hands and glowed the glimmering
hair

That might but move his memory more of one more
fair,

More fair than all this beauty : but in sooth
So fair she too shone in her flower of youth
That scarcely might man's heart hold fast its truth,
Though strong, who gazed upon her : for her eyes
Were emerald-soft as evening-coloured skies,
And a smile in them like the light therein
Slept, or shone out in joy that knew not sin,
Clear as a child's own laughter : and her mouth,
Albeit no rose full-hearted from the south
And passion-coloured for the perfect kiss
That signs the soul for love and stamps it his,
Was soft and bright as any bud new-blown ;
And through her cheek the gentler lifebloom shone
Of mild wild roses nigh the northward sea.
So in her bride-bed lay the bride : and he
Drew nigh, and all the high sad heart 'n him
Yearned on her, seeing the twilight meek and dim
Through all the soft alcove tremblingly lit
With hovering silver, as a heart in it
Beating, that burned from one deep lamp above,
Fainter than fire of torches, as the love
Within him fainter than a bridegroom's fire,
No marriage-torch red with the heart's desire,
But silver-soft, a flameless light that glowed
Starlike along night's dark and starry road

Fell silent as a wind abashed, whose breath
Dies out of heaven, suddenly done to death,
When in between them on the dumb dusk air
Floated the bright shade of a face more fair
Than hers that hard beside him shrank and smiled
And wist of all no more than might a child.
So had she all her heart's will, all she would,
For love's sake that sufficed her, glad and good,
All night safe sleeping in her maidenhood.

v.

ISEULT AT TINTAGEL.

BUT that same night in Cornwall oversea
 Couched at Queen Iseult's hand, against her knee,
 With keen kind eyes that read her whole heart's pain
 Fast at wide watch lay Tristram's hound Hodain,
 The goodliest and the mightiest born on earth,
 That many a forest day of fiery mirth
 Had plied his craft before them ; and the queen
 Cherished him, even for those dim years between,
 More than of old in those bright months far flown
 When ere a blast of Tristram's horn was blown
 Each morning as the woods rekindled, ere
 Day gat full empire of the glimmering air,
 Delight of dawn would quicken him, and fire
 Spring and pant in his breath with bright desire
 To be among the dewy ways on quest :
 But now perforce at restless-hearted rest
 He chafed through days more barren than the sand,
 Soothed hardly but soothed only with her hand,
 Though fain to fawn thereon and follow, still
 With all his heart and all his loving will

Desiring one divided from his sight,
For whose lost sake dawn was as dawn of night
And noon as night's noon in his eyes was dark.
But in the halls far under sat King Mark,
Feasting, and full of cheer, with heart uplift,
As on the night that harper gat his gift
And music revelled on the fitful air,
And songs came floated up the festal stair,
And muffled roar of wassail where the king
Took heart from wine cups and the quiring string
Till all his cold thin veins rejoiced and ran
Strong as with lifeblood of a kingly man.
But the queen shut from sound her wearied ears,
Shut her sad eyes from sense of aught save tears,
And wrung her hair with soft fierce hands, and
prayed

‘O God, God born of woman, of a maid,
Christ, once in flesh of thine own fashion clad ,
O very love, so glad in heaven and sad
On earth for earth's sake alway , since thou art
Pure only, I only impure of spirit and heart,
Since thou for sin's sake and the bitter doom
Didst as a veil put on a virgin's womb,
I that am none, and cannot hear or see
Or shadow or likeness or a sound of thee
Far off, albeit with man's own speech and face
Thou shine yet and thou speak yet, showing forth
grace—

Ah me ! grace only shed on souls that are
Lat and led forth of shadow by thy star—

Alas ! to these men only grace, to these,
 Lord, whom thy love draws Godward, to thy knees—
 I, can I draw thee me-ward, can I seek,
 Who love thee not, to love me? seeing how weak,
 Lord, all this little love I bear thee is,
 And how much is my strong love more than this,
 My love that I love man with, that I bear
 Him sinning through me sinning? wilt thou care,
 God, for this love, if love be any, alas,
 In me to give thee, though long since there was,
 How long, when I too, Lord, was clean, even I,
 That now am unclean till the day I die—
 Haply by burning, harlot-fashion, made
 A horror in all hearts of wife and maid,
 Hateful, not knowing if ever in these mine eyes
 Shone any light of thine in any wise
 Or this were love at all that I bore thee?'

And the night spake, and thundered on the sea,
 Ravening aloud for ruin of lives : and all
 The bastions of the main cliff's northward wall
 Rang response out from all their deepening length,
 As the east wind girded up his godlike strength
 And hurled in hard against that high-towered hold
 The fleeces of the flock that knows no fold,
 The rent white shreds of shattering storm : but she
 Heard not nor heeded wind or storming sea,
 Knew not if night were mild or mad with wind.

' Yea, though deep lips and tender hair be thinned,
 Though cheek wither, brow fade, and bosom wane,
 Shall I change also from this heart again

To maidenhood of heart and holiness?
 Shall I more love thee, Lord, or love him less—
 Ah miserable ! though spirit and heart be rent,
 Shall I repent, Lord God ? shall I repent ?
 Nay, though thou slay me ! for herein I am blest,
 That as I loved him yet I love him best—
 More than mine own soul or thy love or thee,
 Though thy love save and my love save not me.
 Blest am I beyond women even herein,
 That beyond all born women is my sin,
 And perfect my transgression that above
 All offerings of all others is my love,
 Who have chosen it only, and put away for this
 Thee, and my soul's hope, Saviour, of the kiss
 Wherewith thy lips make welcome all thine own
 When in them life and death are overthrown,
 The sinless lips that seal the death of sin,
 The kiss wherewith their dumb lips touched begin
 Singing in heaven.

'Where we shall never, love,
 Never stand up nor sing ! for God above
 Knows us, how too much more than God to me
 Thy sweet love is, my poor love is to thee !
 Dear, dost thou see now, dost thou hear to night,
 Sleeping, my waste wild speech, my face worn white,
 —Speech once heard soft by thee, face once kissed
 red !—

In such a dream as when men see their dead
 And know not if they know if dead these be ?
 Ah love, are thy days my days, and to thee

Are all nights like as my nights? does the sun
Grieve thee? art thou soul-sick till day be done,
And weary till day rises? is thine heart
Full of dead things as mine is? Nay, thou art
Man, with man's strength and praise and pride of life,
No bondwoman, no queen, no loveless wife
That would be shamed albeit she had not sinned.'

And swordlike was the sound of the iron wind,
And as a breaking battle was the sea.

'Nay, Lord, I pray thee let him love not me,
Love me not any more, nor like me die,
And be no more than such a thing as I.
Turn his heart from me, lest my love too lose
Thee as I lose thee, and his fair soul refuse
For my sake thy fair heaven, and as I fell
Fall, and be mixed with my soul and with hell.
Let me die rather, and only; let me be
Hated of him so he be loved of thee,
Lord: for I would not have him with me there
Out of thy light and love in the unlit air,
Out of thy sight in the unseen hell where I
Go gladly, going alone, so thou on high
Lift up his soul and love him—Ah, Lord, Lord,
Shalt thou love as I love him? she that poured
From the alabaster broken at thy feet
An ointment very precious, not so sweet
As that poured likewise forth before thee then
From the rehallowed heart of Magdalen,
From a heart broken, yearning like the dove,
An ointment very precious which is love—

Couldst thou being holy and God, and sinful she,
 Love her indeed as surely she loved thee?
 Nay, but if not, then as we sinners can
 Let us love still in the old sad wise of man
 For with less love than my love, having had
 Mine, though God love him he shall not be glad
 And with such love as my love, I wot well,
 He shall not be disconsolate in hell
 Sad only as souls for utter love's sake be
 Here, and a little sad, perchance, for me—
 Me happy, me more glad than God above,
 In the utmost hell whose fires consume not love !
 For in the waste ways emptied of the sun
 He would say—" Dear, thy place is void, and one
 Weeps among angels for thee, with his face
 Veiled, saying *O sister, how thy chosen place
 Stands desolate, that God made fair for thee !
 Is heaven not sweeter, and are thy brethren, we
 Faster than love on earth and life in hell !*"
 And I—with me were all things then not well?
 Should I not answer—" O love, be well content,
 Look on me, and behold if I repent."
 Thus were more to me than an angel's wings.
 Yea, many men pray God for many things,
 But I pray that this only thing may be.'

And as a full field charging was the sea,
 And as the cry of slain men was the wind

'Yea, since I surely loved him, and he sinned
 Surely, though not as my sin has he black,
 God, give him to me—God, God, give him back !

For now how should we live in twain or die ?
 I am he indeed, thou knowest, and he is I.
 Not man and woman several as we were,
 But one thing with one life and death to bear.
 How should one love his own soul overmuch ?
 And time is long since last I felt the touch,
 The sweet touch of my lover, hand and breath,
 In such delight as puts delight to death,
 Burn my soul through, till spirit and soul and sense,
 In the sharp grasp of the hour, with violence
 Died, and again through pangs of violent birth
 Lived, and laughed out with refluxing might of mirth ;
 Laughed each on other and shuddered into one,
 As a cloud shuddering dies into the sun.
 Ah, sense is that or spirit, soul or flesh,
 That only love lulls or awakes afresh ?
 Ah, sweet is that or bitter, evil or good,
 That very love allays not as he would ?
 Nay, truth is this or vanity, that gives
 No love assurance when love dies or lives ?
 This that my spirit is wrung withal, and yet
 No surer knows if haply thine forget,
 Thou that my spirit is wrung for, nor can say
 Love is not in thee dead as yesterday ?
 Dost thou feel, thou, this heartbeat whence my heart
 Would send thee word what life is mine apart,
 And know by keen response what life is thine ?
 Dost thou not hear one cry of all of mine ?
 O Tristram's heart, have I no part in thee ?
 And all her soul was as the breaking sea,

And all her heart anhungered as the wind.

‘Dost thou repent thee of the sin we sinned?
Dost thou repent thee of the days and nights
That kindled and that quenched for us their lights,
The months that feasted us with all their hours,
The ways that breathed of us in all their flowers,
The dells that sang of us with all their doves?
Dost thou repent thee of the wildwood loves?
Is thine heart changed, and hallowed? art thou
grown

God’s, and not mine? Yet, though my heart make
moan,

Fain would my soul give thanks for thine, if thou
Be saved—yea, fain praise God, and knows not how
How should it know thanksgiving? nay, or learn
Aught of the love wherewith thine own should burn,
God’s, that should cast out as an evil thing
Mine? yea, what hand of prayer have I to cling,
What heart to prophesy, what spurt of sight
To strain insensual eyes toward increate light,
Who look but back on life wherein I sinned?’

And all their past came wailing in the wind,
And all their future thundered in the sea.

‘But if my soul might touch the time to be,
If hand might handle now or eye behold
My life and death ordained me from of old,
Life palpable, compact of blood and breath,
Visible, present, naked, very death,
Should I desire to know before the day
These that I know not, nor is man that may?’

For haply, seeing, my heart would break for fear,
 And my soul timeless cast its load off here,
 Its load of life too bitter, love too sweet,
 And fall down shamed and naked at thy feet,
 God, who wouldst take no pity of it, nor give
 One hour back, one of all its hours to live
 Clothed with my mortal body, that once more,
 Once, on this reach of barren beaten shore,
 This stormy strand of life, ere sail were set,
 Had haply felt love's arms about it yet—
 Yea, ere death's bark put off to seaward, might
 With many a grief have bought me one delight
 That then should know me never. Ah, what years
 Would I endure not, filled up full with tears,
 Bitter like blood and dark as dread of death,
 To win one amorous hour of mingling breath,
 One fire-eyed hour and sunnier than the sun,
 For all these nights and days like nights but one?
 One hour of heaven born once, a stormless birth,
 For all these windy weary hours of earth?
 One, but one hour from birth of joy to death,
 For all these hungering hours of feverish breath?
 And I should lose this, having died and sinned.'

And as man's anguish clamouring cried the wind,
 And as God's anger answering rang the sea.

'And yet what life—Lord God, what life for me
 Has thy strong wrath made ready? Dost thou think
 How lips whose thirst hath only tears to drink
 Grow grey for grief untimely? Dost thou know,
 O happy God, how men wax weary of woe—

Yea, for their wrong's sake that thine hand hath done
 Come even to hate thy semblance in the sun?
 Turn back from dawn and noon and all thy light
 To make their souls one with the soul of night?
 Christ, if thou hear yet or have eyes to see,
 Thou that hadst pity, and hast no pity on me,
 Know'st thou no more, as in this life's sharp span,
 What pain thou hadst on earth, what pain hath man?
 Hast thou no care, that all we suffer yet?
 What help is ours of thee if thou forget?
 What profit have we though thy blood were given,
 If we that sin bleed and be not forgiven?
 Not love but hate, thou bitter God and strange,
 Whose heart as man's heart hath grown cold with
 change,
 Not love but hate thou showest us that have sinned.*

And like a world's cry shuddering was the wind,
 And like a God's voice threatening was the sea.

'Nay, Lord, for thou wast gracious, nay, in thee
 No change can come with time or varying fate,
 No tongue bid thine be less compassionate,
 No sterner eye rebuke for mercy thine,
 No sin put out thy pity—no, not mine.
 Thou knowest us, Lord, thou knowest us, all we are,
 He, and the soul that hath his soul for star
 Thou knowest as I know, Lord, how much more
 worth

Than all souls clad and clasped about with earth,
 But most of all, God, how much more than I,
 Is this man's soul that surely shall not die.

What righteousness, what judgment, Lord most
high,

Were this, to bend a brow of doom as grim
As threats me, me the adulterous wife, on him?
There lies none other nightly by his side :
He hath not sought, he shall not seek a bride.
Far as God sunders earth from heaven above,
So far was my love born beneath his love.
I loved him as the sea-wind loves the sea,
To rend and ruin it only and waste : but he,
As the sea loves a sea-bird loved he me,
To foster and uphold my tired life's wing,
And bounteously beneath me spread forth spring,
A springtide space whereon to float or fly,
A world of happy water, whence the sky
Glowed goodlier, lightening from so glad a glass,
Than with its own light only. Now, alas !
Cloud hath come down and clothed it round with
storm,

And gusts and fits of eddying winds deform
The feature of its glory. Yet be thou,
God, merciful : nay, show but justice now,
And let the sin in him that scarce was his
Stand expiated with exile : and be this
The price for him, the atonement this, that I
With all the sin upon me live, and die
With all thy wrath on me that most have sinned.'

And like man's heart relenting sighed the wind,
And as God's wrath subsiding sank the sea.

'But if such grace be possible—if it be

Not sin more strange than all sins past, and worse
 Evil, that cries upon thee for a curse,
 To pray such prayers from such a heart, do thou
 Hear, and make wide thine hearing toward me now,
 Let not my soul and his for ever dwell
 Sundered though doorn keep always heaven and hell
 Irreconcilable, infinitely apart,
 Keep not in twain for ever heart and heart
 That once, albeit by not thy law, were one,
 Let this be not thy will that this be done.
 Let all else, all thou wilt of evil, be,
 But no doom, none, dividing him and me.'

By this was heaven started eastward, and there came
 Up the rough ripples a labouring light like flame,
 And dawn, sore trembling still and grey with fear,
 Looked hardly forth a face of heavier cheer
 Than one which grief or dread yet half enshrouds,
 Wild eyed and wan, across the cleaving clouds.
 And Iseult, worn with watch long held on pain,
 Turned, and her eye lit on the hound Houndin,
 And all her heart went out in tears and he
 Laid his kind head along her bended knee,
 Till round his neck her arms went hard, and all
 The night past from her as a chain might fall;
 But yet the heart within her, half undone,
 Wailed, and was loth to let her see the sun.

And ere full day brought heaven and earth to flower,
 Far thence, a maiden in a marriage bower,
 That moment, hard by Tristram, oversea,
 Woke with glad eyes Iseult of Brittany

VI.

JOYOUS GARD.

A LITTLE time, O Love, a little light,
 A little hour for ease before the night.
 Sweet Love, that art so bitter ; foolish Love,
 Whom wise men know for wiser, and thy dove
 More subtle than the serpent ; for thy sake
 These pray thee for a little beam to break,
 A little grace to help them, lest men think
 Thy servants have but hours like tears to drink.
 O Love, a little comfort, lest they fear
 To serve as these have served thee who stand here.

For these are thine, thy servants these, that stand
 Here nigh the limit of the wild north land,
 At margin of the grey great eastern sea,
 Dense-islanded with peaks and reefs, that see
 No life but of the fleet wings fair and free
 Which cleave the mist and sunlight all day long
 With sleepless flight and cries more glad than song.
 Strange ways of life have led them hither, here
 To win fleet respite from desire and fear

With armistice from sorrow , strange and sweet
Ways trodden by forlorn and casual feet
Till kinder chance woke toward them kindly will
In happier hearts of lovers, and their ill
Found rest, as healing surely might it not,
By gift and kingly grace of Launcelot
At gracious bidding given of Guenevere.
For in the trembling twilight of this year
Ere April sprang from hope to certitude
Two hearts of friends fast linked had fallen at feud
As they rode forth on hawking, by the sign
Which gave his new bride's brother Ganhardine
To know the truth of Tristram's dealing, how
Faith kept of him against his marriage vow
Kept virginal his bride bed night and morn ,
Whereat, as wroth his blood should suffer scorn,
Came Ganhardine to Tristram, saying, ' Behold,
We have loved thee, and for love we have shown of old
Scorn hast thou shown us wherefore is thy bride
Not thine indeed, a stranger at thy side,
Contemned? what evil hath she done, to be
Mocked with mouth marriage and despised of thee,
Shamed, set at nought, rejected?' But there came
On Tristram's brow and eye the shadow and flame
Confused of wrath and wonder, ere he spake,
Saying, ' Hath she bid thee for thy sister's sake
Plead with me, who believed of her in heart
More nobly than to deem such piteous part
Should find so fair a player? or whence hast thou
Of us this knowledge?' ' Nay,' said he, ' but now,

Riding beneath these whitethorns overhead,
 There fell a flower into her girdlestead
 Which laughing she shook out, and smiling said—
 “Lo, what large leave the wind hath given this stray,
 To lie more near my heart than till this day
 Aught ever since my mother lulled me lay
 Or even my lord came ever ;” whence I wot
 We are all thy scorn, a race regarded not
 Nor held as worth communion of thine own,
 Except in her be found some fault alone
 To blemish our alliance.’ Then replied
 Tristram, ‘ Nor blame nor scorn may touch my bride,
 Albeit unknown of love she live, and be
 Worth a man worthier than her love thought me.
 Faith only, faith withheld me, faith forbade
 The blameless grace wherewith love’s grace makes
 glad

All lives linked else in wedlock ; not that less
 I loved the sweet light of her loveliness,
 But that my love toward faith was more : and thou,
 Albeit thine heart be keen against me now,
 Couldst thou behold my very lady, then
 No more of thee than of all other men
 Should this my faith be held a faithless fault.’
 And ere that day their hawking came to halt
 Being sore of him entreated for a sign,
 He sware to bring his brother Ganhardine
 To sight of that strange Iseult : and thereon
 Forth soon for Cornwall are these brethren gone,

Even to that royal pleasance where the hunt
Rang ever of old with Tristram's horn in front
Blithe as the queen's horse bounded at his side
And first of all her dames forth pranced in pride
That day before them, with a ringing rein
All golden glad, the king's false bride Brangwain,
The queen's true handmaid ever and on her
Glancing, 'Be called for all time truth-teller,
O Tristram, of all true men's tongues alive,'
Quoth Ganhardine, 'for may my soul so thrive
As yet mine eye drank never sight like this.'
'Ay?' Tristram said, 'and she thou look'st on is
So great in grace of goodness, that thou
Hast less thought left of wrath against me now,
Seeing but my lady's handmaid? Nay, behold,
See'st thou no light more golden than of gold
Shine where she moves in midst of all, above
All, past all price or praise or prayer of love?
Lo, this is she.' But as one mazed with wine
Stood, stunned in spirit and stricken, Ganhardine,
And gazed out hard against them and his heart
As with a sword was cloven, and rent apart
As with strong fangs of fire, and scarce he spake,
Saying how his life for even a handmaid's sake
Was made a flame within him. And the knight
Bade him, being known of none that stood in sight,
Bear to Brangwain his ring, that she unseen
Might give in token privily to the queen
And send swift word where under moon or sun
They twain might yet be no more twain but one.

And that same night, under the stars that rolled
 Over their warm deep wildwood-nights of old
 Whose hours for grains of sand shed sparks of fire,
 Such way was made anew for their desire
 By secret wile of sickness feigned, to keep
 The king far off her vigils or her sleep,
 That in the queen's pavilion midway set
 By glimmering moondawn were those lovers met,
 And Ganhardine of Brangwain gat him grace.
 And in some passionate soft interspace
 Between two swells of passion, when their lips
 Breathed, and made room for such brief speech as
 slips

From tongues athirst with draughts of amorous wine
 That leaves them thirstier than the salt sea's brine,
 Was counsel taken how to fly, and where
 Find covert from the wild world's ravening air
 That hunts with storm the feet of nights and days
 Through strange thwart lines of life and flowerless
 ways.

Then said Iseult : ' Lo, now the chance is here
 Foreshown me late by word of Guenevere,
 To give me comfort of thy rumoured wrong,
 My traitor Tristram, when report was strong
 Of me forsaken and thine heart estranged :
 Nor should her sweet soul toward me yet be changed
 Nor all her love lie barren, if mine hand
 Crave harvest of it from the flowering land.
 See therefore if this counsel please thee not,
 That we take horse in haste for Camelot

And seek that friendship of her plighted troth
Which love shall be full fain to lend, nor loth
Shall my love be to take it' So next night
The multitudinous stars laughed round their flight,
Fulfilling far with laughter made of light
The encircling deeps of heaven and in brief space
At Camelot their long love gat them grace
Of those fair twain whose heads men's praise un-
pearled

As love's two lordliest lovers in the world
And thence as guests for harbourage past they forth
To win this noblest hold of all the north.
Far by wild ways and many days they rode,
Till clear across June's kingliest sunset glowed
The great round girth of goodly wall that showed
Where for one clear sweet season's length should be
Their place of strength to rest in, fain and free,
By the utmost margin of the loud lone sea.

And now, O Love, what comfort? God most
high,

Whose life is as a flower's to live and die,
Whose light is everlasting Lord, whose breath
Speaks music through the deathless lips of death
Whereto time's heart rings answer Bard, whom time
Hears, and is vanquished with a wandering rhyme
That once thy lips made fragrant Seer, whose sooth
Joy knows not well, but sorrow knows for truth,
Being priestess of thy soothsayings Love, what grace
Shall these twain find at last before thy face?

This many a year they have served thee, and
deserved,

If ever man might yet of all that served,
Since the first heartbeat bade the first man's knee
Bend, and his mouth take music, praising thee,
Some comfort ; and some honey indeed of thine
Thou hast mixed for these with life's most bitter wine
Commending to their passionate lips a draught
No deadlier than thy chosen of old have quaffed
And blessed thine hand, their cupbearer's : for not
On all men comes the grace that seals their lot
As holier in thy sight, for all these feuds
That rend it, than the light-souled multitude's,
Nor thwarted of thine hand nor blessed ; but these
Shall see no twilight, Love, nor fade at ease,
Grey-grown and careless of desired delight,
But lie down tired and sleep before the night.
These shall not live till time or change may chill
Or doubt divide or shame subdue their will,
Or fear or slow repentance work them wrong,
Or love die first : these shall not live so long.
Death shall not take them drained of dear true life
Already, sick or stagnant from the strife,
Quenched : not with dry-drawn veins and lingering
breath
Shall these through crumbling hours crouch down to
death.
Swift, with one strong clean leap, ere life's pulse tire,
Most like the leap of lions or of fire,

Sheer death shall bound upon them one pang past,
The first keen sense of him shall be their last,
Their last shall be no sense of any fear,
More than their life had sense of anguish here.

Weeks and light months had fled at swallow's
speed

Since here their first hour sowed for them the seed
Of many sweet as rest or hope could be,
Since on the blown beach of a glad new sea
Wherein strange rocks like fighting men stand scarred
They saw the strength and help of Joyous Gard.
Within the full deep glorious tower that stands
Between the wild sea and the broad wild lands
Love led and gave them quiet and they drew
Life like a God's life in each wind that blew,
And took their rest, and triumphed. Day by day
The mighty moorlands and the sea walls grey,
The brown bright waters of green fells that sing
One song to rocks and flowers and birds on wing,
Beheld the joy and glory that they had,
Passing, and how the whole world made them glad,
And their great love was mixed with all things great,
As life being lovely, and yet being strong like fate
For when the sun sprang on the sudden sea
Their eyes sprang eastward, and the day to be
Was lit in them untimely such delight
They took yet of the clear cold breath and light
That goes before the morning, and such grace
Was deathless in them through their whole life's
space

As dies in many with their dawn that dies
And leaves in pulseless hearts and flameless eyes
No light to lighten and no tear to weep
For youth's high joy that time has cast on sleep.
Yea, this old grace and height of joy they had,
To lose no jot of all that made them glad
And filled their springs of spirit with such fire
That all delight fed in them all desire ;
And no whit less than in their first keen prime
The spring's breath blew through all their summer
time,

And in their skies would sunlike Love confuse
Clear April colours with hot August hues,
And in their hearts one light of sun and moon
Reigned, and the morning died not of the noon ;
Such might of life was in them, and so high
Their heart of love rose higher than fate could fly.
And many a large delight of hawk and hound
The great glad land that knows no bourne or bound,
Save the wind's own and the outer sea-bank's, gave
Their days for comfort ; many a long blithe wave
Buoyed their blithe bark between the bare bald rocks,
Deep, steep, and still, save for the swift free flocks
Unshepherded, uncompassed, unconfined,
That when blown foam keeps all the loud air blind
Mix with the wind's their triumph, and partake
The joy of blasts that ravin, waves that break,
All round and all below their mustering wings,
A clanging cloud that round the cliff's edge clings

On each bleak bluff breaking the strenuous tides
That rings reverberate mirth when storm bestrides
The subject night in thunder many a noon
They took the moorland's or the bright sea's boon
With all their hearts into their spirit of sense,
Rejoicing, where the sudden dells grew dense
With sharp thick flight of hillside birds, or where
On some strait rock's ledge in the intense mute all
Erect against the cliff's sheer sunlit white
Blue as the clear north heaven, clothed warm with
light,

Stood neck to bended neck and wing to wing
With heads fast hidden under, close as cling
Flowers on one flowering almond branch in spring
Three herons deep asleep against the sun,
Each with one bright foot downward poised, and one
Wing hidden hard by the bright head, and all
Still as fair shapes fixed on some wondrous wall
Of munster aisle or cloister-close or hall
To take even time's eye prisoner with delight.
Or, satisfied with joy of sound and sight,
They sat and communed of things past what state
King Arthur, yet unwarred upon by fate,
Held high in hall at Camelot, like one
Whose lordly life was as the mounting sun
That climbs and pauses on the point of noon,
Sovereign how royal rang the tourney's tune
Through Tristram's three days' triumph, spear to
spear,
When Iseult shone enthroned by Guenevere,

Rose against rose, the highest adored on earth,
Imperial : yet with subtle notes of mirth
Would she bemoan her praises, and bemoan
Her glory by that splendour overthrown
Which lightened from her sister's eyes elate ;
Saying how by night a little light seems great,
But less than least of all things, very nought,
When dawn undoes the web that darkness wrought ;
How like a tower of ivory well designed
By subtlest hand subserving subtlest mind,
Ivory with flower of rose incarnadined
And kindling with some God therein revealed,
A light for grief to look on and be healed,
Stood Guenevere : and all beholding her
Were heartstruck even as earth at midsummer
With burning wonder, hardly to be borne.
So was that amorous glorious lady born,
A fiery memory for all storied years :
Nor might men call her sisters crowned her peers,
Her sister queens, put all by her to scorn :
She had such eyes as are not made to mourn ;
But in her own a gleaming ghost of tears
Shone, and their glance was slower than Guenevere's,
And fitfuller with fancies grown of grief ;
Shamed as a Mayflower shames an autumn leaf
Full well she wist it could not choose but be
If in that other's eyeshot standing she
Should lift her looks up ever : wherewithal
Like fires whose light fills heaven with festival

Flamed her eyes full on Tristram's, and he laughed,
Answering, 'What wile of sweet child hearted craft
That children forge for children, to beguile
Eyes known of them not witless of the wile
But fain to seem for sport's sake self-deceived,
Wilt thou find out now not to be believed?
Or how shall I trust more than ouphe or elf
Thy truth to me-ward, who behest thyself?'
'Nor elf nor ouphe or aught of ainer kind,'
Quoth she, 'though made of moonbeams moist and
 blind,
Is light if weighed with man's winged weightless mind.
Though thou keep somewise troth with me, God wot,
When thou didst wed, I doubt, thou thoughtest not
So charly to keep it.' 'Nay,' said he,
'Yet am not I rebukable by thee
As Launcelot, erring, held me ere he wist
No mouth save thine of mine was ever kissed
Save as a sister's only, since we twain
Drank first the draught assigned our lips to drain
That Fate and Love with darkling hands commist
Poured, and no power to part them came betwixt,
But either's will, howbeit they seem at strife,
Was toward us one, as death itself and life
Are one sole doom toward all men, nor may one
Behold not darkness, who beholds the sun'
 'Ah, then,' she said, 'what word is this men hear
Of Merlin, how some doom too strange to fear
Was cast but late about him oversea,
Sweet recreant, in thy bridal Brittany?

Is not his life scaled fast on him with sleep,
By witchcraft of his own and love's, to keep
Till earth be fire and ashes ?'

' Surely,' said

Her lover, ' not as one alive or dead
The great good wizard, well beloved and well
Predestinate of heaven that casts out hell
For guerdon gentler far than all men's fate,
Exempt alone of all predestinate,
Takes his strange rest at heart of slumberland,
More deep asleep in green Broceliande
Than shipwrecked sleepers in the soft green sea
Beneath the weight of wandering waves : but he
Hath for those roofing waters overhead
Above him always all the summer spread
Or all the winter wailing : or the sweet
Late leaves marked red with autumn's burning feet,
Or withered with his weeping, round the seer
Rain, and he sees not, nor may heed or hear
The witness of the winter : but in spring
He hears above him all the winds on wing
Through the blue dawn between the brightening
boughs,

And on shut eyes and slumber-smitten brows
Feels ambient change in the air and strengthening
sun,

And knows the soul that was his soul at one
With the ardent world's, and in the spirit of earth
His spirit of life reborn to mightier birth
And mixed with things of elder life than ours ;
With cries of birds, and kindling lamps of flowers,

And sweep and song of winds, and fruitful light
Of sunbeams, and the far faint breath of night,
And waves and woods at morning and in all,
Soft as at noon the slow sea's rise and fall,
He hears in spirit a song that none but he
Hears from the mystic mouth of Nimue
Shed like a consecration, and his heart,
Hearing, is made for love's sake as a part
Of that far singing, and the life thereof
Part of that life that feeds the world with love
Yea, heart in heart is molten, hers and his,
Into the world's heart and the soul that is
Beyond or sense or vision, and their breath
Stirs the soft springs of deathless life and death,
Death that bears life, and change that brings forth
seed

Of life to death and death to life indeed,
As blood recircling through the unsounded veins
Of earth and heaven with all their joys and pains.
Ah, that when love shall laugh no more nor weep
We too, we too might hear that song and sleep!

'Yea,' said Iscalt, 'some joy it were to be
Lost in the sun's light and the all girdling sea,
Mixed with the winds and woodlands, and to bear
Part in the large life of the quickening air,
And the sweet earth's, our mother yet to pass
More fleet than mirrored faces from the glass
Out of all pain and all delight, so far
That love should seem but as the furthest star
Sunk deep in trembling heaven, scarce seen or known,

As a dead moon forgotten, once that shone
Where now the sun shines—nay, not all things yet,
Not all things always, dying, would I forget.’

And Tristram answered amorously, and said :
‘ O heart that here art mine, O heavenliest head
That ever took men’s worship here, which art
Mine, how shall death put out the fire at heart,
Quench in men’s eyes the head’s remembered light
That time shall set but higher in more men’s sight ?
Think thou not much to die one earthly day,
Being made not in their mould who pass away
Nor who shall pass for ever.’

‘ Ah,’ she said,
‘ What shall it profit me, being praised and dead ?
What profit have the flowers of all men’s praise ?
What pleasure of our pleasure have the days
That pour on us delight of life and mirth ?
What fruit of all our joy on earth has earth ?
Nor am I—nay, my lover, am I one
To take such part in heaven’s enkindling sun
And in the inviolate air and sacred sea
As clothes with grace that wondrous Nimue ?
For all her works are bounties, all her deeds
Blessings ; her days are scrolls wherein love reads
The record of his mercies ; heaven above
Hath not more heavenly holiness of love
Than earth beneath, wherever pass or pause
Her feet that move not save by love’s own laws,
In gentleness of godlike wayfaring
To heal men’s hearts as earth is healed by spring

Of all such woes as winter what am I,
 Love, that have strength but to desire and die,
 That have but grace to love and do thee wrong,
 What am I that my name should live so long,
 Save as the star that crossed thy star struck lot,
 With hers whose light was life to Launcelot?
 Life gave she him, and strength, and fame to be
 For ever I, what gift can I give thee?
 Penl and sleepless watches, fearful breath
 Of dread more bitter for my sake than death
 When death came nigh to call me by my name,
 Exile, rebuke, remorse, and—O, not shame
 Shame only, thus I gave thee not, whom none
 May give that worst thing ever—no, not one.
 Of all that hate, all hateful hearts that see
 Darkness for light and hate where love should be,
 None for my shame's sake may speak shame of thee.

And Tristram answering ere he kissed her smiled
 'O very woman, god at once and child,
 What ails thee to desire of me once more
 The assurance that thou hadst in heart before?
 For all this wild sweet waste of sweet vain breath,
 Thou knowest I know thou hast given me life, not
 death.

The shadow of death, informed with shows of strife,
 Was ere I won thee all I had of life.
 Light war, light love, light living, dreams in sleep,
 Joy slight and light, not glad enough to weep,
 Filled up my foolish days with sound and shine,
 Vision and gleam from strange men's cast on mine,
 Reverberate light from eyes presaging thine

That shed but shadowy moonlight where thy face
Now sheds forth sunshine in the deep same place,
The deep live heart half dead and shallower then
Than summer fords which thwart not wandering men
For how should I, signed sorrow's from my birth,
Kiss dumb the loud red laughing lips of mirth?
Or how, sealed thine to be, love less than heaven on earth?
My heart in me was held at restless rest,
Presageful of some prize beyond its quest,
Prophetic still with promise, fain to find the best.
For one was fond and one was blithe and one
Fairer than all save twain whose peers are none ;
For third on earth is none that heaven hath seen
To stand with Guenevere beside my queen.
Not Nimue, girt with blessing as a guard :
Not the soft lures and laughter of Ettarde :
Not she, that splendour girdled round with gloom,
Crowned as with iron darkness of the tomb,
And clothed with clouding conscience of a monstrous
doom,
Whose blind incestuous love brought forth a fire
To burn her ere it burn its darkling sire,
Her mother's son, King Arthur : yet but late
We saw pass by that fair live shadow of fate,
The queen Morgause of Orkney, like a dream
That scares the night when moon and starry beam
Sicken and swoon before some sorcerer's eyes
Whose wordless charms defile the saintly skies,
Bright still with fire and pulse of blood and breath,
Whom her own sons have doomed for shame to death.'

'Death—yea,' quoth she, 'there is not said or heard
So oft aloud on earth so sure a word.
Death, and again death, and for each that saith
Ten tongues chime answer to the sound of death.
Good end God send us ever—so men pray
But I—thus end God send me, would I say,
To die not of division and a heart
Rent or with sword of severance cloven apart,
But only when thou diest and only where thou art,
O thou my soul and spirit and breath to me,
O light, life, love! yea, let this only be,
That dying I may praise God who gave me thee,
Let hap what will thereafter'

So that day

They communed, even till even was worn away,
Nor aught they said seemed strange or sad to say,
But sweet as night's dim dawn to weariness
Nor loved they life or love for death's sake less,
Nor feared they death for love's or life's sake more.
And on the sounding soft funereal shore
They, watching till the day should wholly die,
Saw the far sea sweep to the far grey sky,
Saw the long sands sweep to the long grey sea.
And night made one sweet must of moor and lea,
And only far off shore the foam gave light
And life in them sank silent as the night.

VII.

THE WIFE'S VIGIL.

But all that year in Brittany forlorn,
 More sick at heart with wrath than fear of scorn
 And less in love with love than grief, and less
 With grief than pride of spirit and bitterness,
 Till all the sweet life of her blood was changed
 And all her soul from all her past estranged
 And all her will with all itself at strife
 And all her mind at war with all her life,
 Dwelt the white-handed Iseult, maid and wife,
 A mourner that for mourning robes had on
 Anger and doubt and hate of things foregone.
 For that sweet spirit of old which made her sweet
 Was parched with blasts of thought as flowers with
 heat
 And withered as with wind of evil will ;
 Though slower than frosts or fires consume or kill
 That bleak black wind vexed all her spirit still.
 As ripples reddening in the roughening breath
 Of the eager east when dawn does night to death,

So rose and stirred and kindled in her thought
Fierce barren fluctuant fires that lit not aught,
But scorched her soul with yearning keen as hate
And dreams that left her wrath disconsolate.
When change came first on that first heaven where all
Life's hours were flowers that dawn's light hand let fall,
The sun that smote her dewy cloud of days
Wrought from its showery folds his rainbow's rays,
For love the red, for hope the gentle green,
But yellow jealousy glared pale between.
Ere yet the sky grew heavier, and her head
Bent flowerwise, chill with change and fancies fled,
She saw but love arch all her heaven across with red,
A burning bloom that seemed to breathe and beat
And waver only as flame with rapturous heat
Wavers, and all the world therewith smelt sweet,
As incense kindling from the rose red flame
And when that full flush waned, and love became
Scarce fainter, though his fading horoscope
From certitude of sight receded, hope
Held yet her April coloured light aloft
As though to lure back love, a lamp sublime and soft
But soon that light paled as a leaf grows pale
And fluttered leaf like in the gathering gale
And melted even as dew flakes, whose brief sheen
The sun that gave despoils of glittering green,
Till harder shone 'twixt hope and love grown cold
A sallow light like withering autumn's gold,
The pale strong flame of jealous thought, that glows
More deep than hope's green bloom or love's
enkindled rose

As though the sunflower's faint fierce disk absorbed
The spirit and heart of starrier flowers disorbed.

That same full hour of twilight's doors unbarred
To let bright night behold in Joyous Gard
The glad grave eyes of lovers far away
Watch with sweet thoughts of death the death of day
Saw lonelier by the narrower opening sea
Sit fixed at watch Iseult of Brittany.

As darkness from deep valleys void and bleak
Climbs till it clothe with night the sunniest peak
Where only of all a mystic mountain-land
Day seems to cling yet with a trembling hand
And yielding heart reluctant to recede,
So, till her soul was clothed with night indeed,
Rose the slow cloud of envious will within
And hardening hate that held itself no sin,
Veiled heads of vision, eyes of evil gleam,
Dim thought on thought, and darkling dream on dream.
Far off she saw in 'spirit, and seeing abhorred,
The likeness wrought on darkness of her lord
Shine, and the imperial semblance at his side
Whose shadow from her seat cast down the bride,
Whose power and ghostly presence thrust her forth : -
Beside that unknown other sea far north
She saw them, clearer than in present sight
Rose on her eyes the starry shadow of night ;
And on her heart that heaved with gathering fate
Rose red with storm the starless shadow of hate ;
And eyes and heart made one saw surge and swell
The fires of sunset like the fires of hell.

As though God's wrath would burn up sin with shame,
The incensed red gold of deepening heaven grew
flame

The sweet green spaces of the soft low sky
Faded, as fields that withering wind leaves dry
The sea's was like a doomsman's blasting breath
From lips afoam with ravenous last of death
A night like desolation, sombre starred,
Above the great walled girth of Joyous Gard
Spread forth its wide sad strength of shadow and
gloom

Wherein those twain were compassed round with doom :
Hell from beneath called on them, and she heard
Reverberate judgment in the wild wind's word
Cry, till the sole sound of their names that rang
Clove all the sea-mist with a clarion's clang,
And clouds to clouds and flames to clustering flames
Beat back the dark noise of the direful names.
Fear and strong exultation caught her breath,
And triumph like the bitterness of death,
And rapture like the rage of hate allayed
With ruin and ravin that its might hath made ,
And her heart swelled and strained itself to hear
What may be heard of no man's hungering ear,
And as a soil that cleaves in twain for drouth
Thursted for judgment given of God's own mouth
Against them, till the strength of dark desire
Was in her as a flame of hell's own fire.
Nor seemed the wrath which held her spirit in stress
Aught else or worse than passionate holiness,

Nor the ardent hate which called on judgment's rod
More hateful than the righteousness of God.
'How long, till thou do justice, and my wrong
Stand expiate? O long-suffering judge, how long?
Shalt thou not put him in mine hand one day
Whom I so loved, to spare not but to slay?
Shalt thou not cast her down for me to tread,
Me, on the pale pride of her humbled head?
Do I not well, being angry? doth not hell
Require them? yea, thou knowest that I do well.
Is not thy seal there set of bloodred light
For witness on the brows of day and night?
Who shall unseal it? what shall melt away
Thy signet from the doors of night and day?
No man, nor strength of any spirit above,
Nor prayer, nor ardours of adulterous love.
Thou art God, the strong lord over body and soul:
Hast thou not in the terrors of thy scroll
All names of all men written as with fire?
Thine only breath bids time and space respire:
And are not all things evil in them done
More clear in thine eyes than in ours the sun?
Hast thou not sight stretched wide enough to see
These that offend it, these at once and me?
Is thine arm shortened or thine hand struck down
As palsied? have thy brows not strength to frown?
Are thine eyes blind with film of withering age?
Burns not thine heart with righteousness of rage
Yet, and the royal rancour toward thy foes
Retributive of ruin? Time should close,

Thou saidst, and earth fade as a leaf grows grey,
Ere one word said of thine should pass away
Was this then not thy word, thou God most high,
That sin shall surely bring forth death and die,
Seeing how these twain live and have joy of life,
His harlot and the man that made me wife?
For is it I, perchance, I that have sinned?
Me, peradventure, should thy wasting wind
Smite, and thy sun blast, and thy storms devour
Me with keen fangs of lightning? should thy power
Put forth on me the weight of its awakening hour?
Shall I that bear this burden bear that weight
Of judgment? is my sin against thee great,
If all my heart against them burn with all its hate?
Thine, and not mine, should hate be? nay, but me
They have spoiled and scoffed at, who can touch not
thee.

Me, me, the fullness of their joy drains dry,
Their fruitfulness makes barren thou, not I,
Lord, is it, whom their wrongdoing clothes with shame,
That all who speak shoot tongues out at thy name
As all who hear mock mine? Make me thy sword
At least, if even thou too be wronged, O Lord,
At all of these that wrong me make mine hand
As lightning, or my tongue a fiery brand,
To burn or smite them with thy wrath behold,
I have nought on earth save thee for hope or hold,
Fail me not thou I have nought but this to crave,
Make me thy mean to give them to the grave,

Thy sign that all men seeing may speak thee just,
Thy word which turns the strengths of sin to dust,
Thy blast which burns up towers and thrones with fire.
Lord, is this gift, this grace that I require,
So great a gift, Lord, for thy grace to give
And bid me bear thy part retributive?
That I whom scorn makes mouths at, I might be
Thy witness if loud sin may mock at thee?
For lo, my life is as a barren ear
Plucked from the sheaf : dark days drive past me here
Downtrodden, while joy's reapers pile their sheaves,
A thing more vile than autumn's weariest leaves,
For these the sun filled once with sap of life.
O thou my lord that hadst me to thy wife,
Dost thou not fear at all, remembering me,
The love that bowed my whole soul down to thee?
Is this so wholly nought for man to dread,
Man, whose life walks between the quick and dead,
Naked, and warred about with wind and sea,
That one should love and hate as I do thee?
That one should live in all the world his foe
So mortal as the hate that loves him so?
Nought, is it nought, O husband, O my knight,
O strong man and indomitable in fight,
That one more weak than foam-bells on the sea
Should have in heart such thoughts as I of thee?
Thou art bound about with stately strengths for bands :
What strength shall keep thee from my strengthless
hands?

Thou art girt about with goodly guards and great
What fosse may fence thee round as deep as hate?
Thou art wise will wisdom teach thee fear of me?
Thou art great of heart shall this deliver thee?
What wall so massive, or what tower so high,
Shall be thy surety that thou shouldst not die,
If that which comes against thee be but I?
Who shall rise up of power to take thy part,
What skill find strength to save, what strength find art,
If that which wars against thee be my heart?
Not iron, nor the might of force afield,
Nor edge of sword, nor sheltering weight of shield,
Nor all thy fame since all thy praise began,
Nor all the love and laud thou hast of man,
Nor, though his noiseless hours with wool be shod,
Shall God's love keep thee from the wrath of God.
O son of sorrows, hast thou said at heart,
Haply, God loves thee, God shall take thy part,
Who hath all these years endured thee, since thy birth
From sorrow's womb bade sin be born on earth?
So long he hath cast his buckler over thee,
Shall he not surely guard thee even from me?
Yea, but if yet he give thee while I live
Into mine hands as he shall surely give,
Ere death at last bring darkness on thy face,
Call then on him, call not on me for grace,
Cast not away one prayer, one suppliant breath,
On me that commune all this while with death.
For I that was not and that was thy wife
Desire not but one hour of all thy life

Wherein to triumph till that hour be past ;
But this mine hour I look for is thy last.'

So mused she till the fire in sea and sky
Sank, and the northwest wind spake harsh on high,
And like the sea's heart waxed her heart that heard,
Strong, dark, and bitter, till the keen wind's word
Seemed of her own soul spoken, and the breath
All round her not of darkness, but of death.

VIII.

THE LAST PILGRIMAGE.

ENOUGH of ease, O Love, enough of light,
 Enough of rest before the shadow of night.
 Strong Love, whom death finds feebler ; kingly Love,
 Whom time discrowns in season, seeing thy dove
 Spell-stricken by the serpent ; for thy sake
 These that saw light see night's dawn only break,
 Night's cup filled up with slumber, whence men think
 The draught more dread than thine was dire to drink.
 O Love, thy day sets darkling : hope and fear
 Fall from thee standing stern as death stands here.

For what have these to do with fear or hope
 On whom the gates of outer darkness ope,
 On whom the door of life's desire is barred ?
 Past like a cloud, their days in Joyous Gard
 Gleam like a cloud the westering sun stains red
 Till all the blood of day's blithe heart be bled
 And all night's heart requickened ; in their eyes
 So flame and fade those far memorial skies,
 So shines the moorland, so revives the sea,
 Whereon they gazing mused of things to be

And wist not more of them than waters know
What wind with next day's change of tide shall blow
Dark roll the deepening days whose waves divide
Unseasonably, with storm struck change of tide,
Tristram from Iseult nor may sorrow say
If better wind shall blow than yesterday
With next day risen or any day to come.
For ere the songs of summer's death fell dumb,
And autumn bade the imperial moorlands change
Their purples, and the bracken's bloom grow strange
As hope's green blossom touched with time's harsh
rust,
Was all their joy of life shaken to dust,
And all its fire made ashes by the strand
Where late they strayed and communed hand from
hand
For the last time fell separate, eyes of eyes
Took for the last time leave, and saw the skies
Dark with their deep division. The last time—
The last that ever love's rekindling rhyme
Should keep for them life's days and nights in tune
With refluence of the morning and the moon
Alternative in music, and make one
The secrets of the stardawn and the sun
For these twain souls ere darkness held them fast,
The last before the labour marked for last
And toil of utmost knighthood, till the wage
Of rest might crown his crowning pilgrimage
Whereon forth faring must he take farewell,
With spear for staff and sword for scallop-shell

And scrip wherein close memory hoarded yet
Things holier held than death might well forget ;
The last time ere the travel were begun
Whose goal is un beholden of the sun,
The last wherewith love's eyes might yet be lit,
Came, and they could but dream they knew not it.

For Tristram parting from her wist at heart
How well she wist they might not choose but part,
And he pass forth a pilgrim, when there came
A sound of summons in the high king's name
For succour toward his vassal Triamour,
King in wild Wales, now spoiled of all his power,
As Tristram's father ere his fair son's birth,
By one the strongest of the sons of earth,
Urgan, an iron bulk of giant mould :
And Iseult in Tintagel as of old
Sat crowned with state and sorrow : for her lord
At Arthur's hand required her back restored,
And willingly compelled against her will
She yielded, saying within her own soul still
Some season yet of soft or stormier breath
Should haply give her life again or death :
For now nor quick nor dead nor bright nor dark
Were all her nights and days wherein King Mark
Held haggard watch upon her, and his eyes
Were cloudier than the gradual wintering skies
That closed about the wan wild land and sea.
And bitter toward him waxed her heart : but he
Was rent in twain betwixt harsh love and hate
With pain and passion half compassionate

That yearned and laboured to be quit of shame,
And could not and his life grew smouldering flame,
And hers a cloud full-charged with storm and shower,
Though touched with trembling gleams of fire's bright
flower

That flashed and faded on its fitful verge,
As hope would strive with darkness and emerge
And sink, a swimmer strangled by the swallowing
surge.

But Tristram by dense hills and deepening vales
Rode through the wild glad wastes of glorious Wales,
High hearted with desire of happy fight
And strong in soul with merrier sense of might
Than since the fair first years that hailed him knight :
For all his will was toward the war, so long
Had love repressed and wrought his glory wrong,
So far the triumph and so fair the praise
Seemed now that kindled all his April days.
And here in bright blown autumn, while his life
Was summer's yet for strength toward love or strife,
Blithe waxed his hope toward battle, and high desire
To pluck once more as out of circling fire
Fame, the broad flower whose breath makes death
more sweet

Than roses crushed by love's receding feet
But all the lovely land wherein he went
The blast of ruin and ravenous war had rent ,
And black with fire the fields where homesteads were,
And foul with festering dead the high soft air,

And loud with wail of women many a stream
Whose own live song was like love's deepening dream,
Spake all against the spoiler : wherefore still
Wrath waxed with pity, quickening all his will,
In Tristram's heart for every league he rode
Through the aching land so broad a curse bestrode
With so supreme a shadow : till one dawn,
Above the green bloom of a gleaming lawn,
High on the strait steep windy bridge that spanned
A glen's deep mouth, he saw that shadow stand
Visible, sword on thigh and mace in hand
Vast as the mid bulk of a roof-tree's beam.
So, sheer above the wild wolf-haunted stream,
Dire as the face disfeatured of a dream,
Rose Urgan : and his eyes were night and flame ;
But like the fiery dawn were his that came
Against him, lit with more sublime desire
Than lifts toward heaven the leaping heart of fire :
And strong in vantage of his perilous place
The huge high presence, red as earth's first race,
Reared like a reed the might up of his mace,
And smote : but lightly Tristram swerved, and drove
Right in on him, whose void stroke only clove
Air, and fell wide, thundering athwart : and he
Sent forth a stormier cry than wind or sea
When midnight takes the tempest for her lord ;
And all the glen's throat seemed as hell's that roared ;
But high like heaven's light over hell shone Tristram's
sword,

Falling, and bright as storm shows God's bare brand
Flashed as it shore sheer off the huge right hand
Whose strength was as the shadow of death on all that
land.

And like the trunk of some grim tree sawn through
Reeled Urgan, as his left hand grasped and drew
A steel by sorcerers tempered and anew
Raged the red wind of fluctuant fight, till all
The cliffs were thrilled as by the clangorous call
Of storm's blown trumpets from the core of night,
Charging and even as with the storm wind's might
On Tristram's helm that sword crashed and the knight
Fell, and his arms clashed, and a wide cry brake
From those far off that heard it, for his sake
Soul stricken and that bulk of monstrous birth
Sent forth again a cry more dire for mirth
But ere the sunbright arms were soiled of earth
They flashed again, re-risen and swift and loud
Rang the strokes out as from a circling cloud,
So dense the dust wrought over them its drifted
shroud.

Strong strokes, within the mist their battle made,
Each hailed on other through the shifting shade
That clung about them hurtling as the swift fight
swayed

And each between the jointed corslet saw
Break forth his foe's bright blood at each grim flaw
Steel made in hammered iron till again
The fiend put forth his might more strong for pain
And cleft the great knight's glittering shield in twain,

Laughing for very wrath and thirst to kill,
A beast's broad laugh of blind and wolfish will,
And smote again ere Tristram's lips drew breath
Panting, and swept as by the sense of death,
That surely should have touched and sealed them fast
Save that the sheer stroke shrilled aside, and passed
Frustrate : but answering Tristram smote anew,
And thrust the brute breast as with lightning through
Clean with one cleaving stroke of perfect might :
And violently the vast bulk leapt upright,
And plunged over the bridge, and fell : and all
The cliffs reverberate from his monstrous fall
Rang : and the land by Tristram's grace was free.
So with high laud' and honour thence went he,
And southward set his sail again, and passed
The lone land's ending, first beheld and last
Of eyes that look on England from the sea :
And his heart mourned within him, knowing how she
Whose heart with his was fatefully made fast
Sat now fast bound, as though some charm were cast
About her, such a brief space eastward thence,
And yet might soul not break the bonds of sense
And bring her to him in very life and breath
More than had this been even the sea of death
That washed between them, and its wide sweet light
The dim strait's darkness of the narrowing night
That shuts about men dying whose souls put forth
To pierce its passage through : but south and north
Alike for him were other than they were :
For all the northward coast shone smooth and fair,

And off its iron cliffs the keen-edged air
Blew summer, kindling from her mute bright mouth,
But winter breathed out of the murmuring south,
Where, pale with wrathful watch on passing ships,
The lone wife lay in wait with wan dumb lips.
Yet, sailing where the shoreward ripple curled
Of the most wild sweet waves in all the world,
His soul took comfort even for joy to see
The strong deep joy of living sun and sea,
The large deep love of living sea and land,
As past the lonely lion-guarded strand
Where that huge warder lifts his couchant sides,
Asleep, above the sleepless lapse of tides,
The light sail swept, and past the unsounded caves
Unsearchable, wherein the pulse of waves
Throbs through perpetual darkness to and fro,
And the blind night swims heavily below
While heavily the strong noon broods above,
Even to the very bay whence very Love,
Strong daughter of the giant gods who wrought
Sun, earth, and sea out of their procreant thought,
Most meetly might have risen, and most divine
Beheld and heard things round her sound and shone
From floors of foam and gold to walls of serpentine.
For splendid as the limbs of that supreme
Incarnate beauty through men's visions gleam,
Whereof all fairest things are even but shadow or
dream,
And lovely like as Love's own heavenliest face,

Gleams there and glows the presence and the grace
Even of the mother of all, in perfect pride of place.
For otherwhere beneath our world-wide sky
There may not be beheld of men that die
Aught else like this that dies not, nor may stress
Of ages that bow down men's works make less
The exultant awe that clothes with power its loveliness.
For who sets eye thereon soever knows
How since these rocks and waves first rolled and rose
The marvel of their many-coloured might
Hath borne this record sensible to sight,
The witness and the symbol of their own delight,
The gospel graven of life's most heavenly law,
Joy, brooding on its own still soul with awe,
A sense of godlike rest in godlike strife,
The sovereign conscience of the spirit of life.
Nor otherwhere on strand or mountain tower
Hath such fair beauty shining forth in flower
Put on the imperial robe of such imperious power.
For all the radiant rocks from depth to height
Burn with vast bloom of glories blossom-bright
As though the sun's own hand had thrilled them
 through with light
And stained them through with splendour : yet from
 thence
Such awe strikes rapture through the spirit of sense
From all the inaccessible sea-wall's girth,
That exultation, bright at heart as mirth,
Bows deeper down before the beauty of earth

Than fear may bow down ever nor shall one
Who meets at Alpine dawn the mounting sun
On heights too high for many a wing to climb
Be touched with sense of aught seen more sublime
Than here smiles high and sweet in face of heaven
and time

For here the flower of fire, the soft hoar bloom
Of springtide olive woods, the warm green gloom
Of clouded seas that swell and sound with dawn of
doom,

The keen thwart lightning and the wan grey light
Of stormy sunrise crossed and vexed with night,
Flash, loom, and laugh with divers hues in one
From all the curved cliff's face, till day be done,
Against the sea's face and the gazing sun.

And whensoever a strong wave, high in hope,
Sweeps up some smooth slant breadth of stone aslope,
That glowed with duskier fire of hues less bright,
Swift as it sweeps back springs to sudden sight
The splendour of the moist rock's fervent light,
Fresh as from dew of birth when time was born
Out of the world conceiving womb of morn.

All its quenched flames and darkling hues divine
Leap into lustrous life and laugh and shine
And darken into swift and dim decline

For one brief breath's space till the next wave run
Right up, and ripple down again, undone,
And leave it to be kissed and kindled of the sun.
And all these things, bright as they shone before
Man first set foot on earth or sail from shore,

Rose not less radiant than the sun sees now
When the autumn sea was cloven of Tristram's prow,
And strong in sorrow and hope and woful will
That hope might move not nor might sorrow kill
He held his way back toward the wild sad shore
Whence he should come to look on these no more,
Nor ever, save with sunless eyes shut fast,
Sail home to sleep in home-born earth at last.

And all these things fled fleet as light or breath
Past, and his heart waxed cold and dull as death,
Or swelled but as the tides of sorrow swell,
To sink with sullen sense of slow farewell.
So surely seemed the silence even to sigh
Assurance of inveterate prophecy,
'Thou shalt not come again home hither ere thou die.'
And the wind mourned and triumphed, and the sea
Wailed and took heart and trembled ; nor might he
Hear more of comfort in their speech, or see
More certitude in all the waste world's range
Than the only certitude of death and change.
And as the sense and semblance fluctuated
Of all things heard and seen alive or dead
That smote far off upon his ears or eyes
Or memory mixed with forecasts fain to rise
And fancies faint as ghostliest prophecies,
So seemed his own soul, changefully forlorn,
To shrink and triumph and mount up and mourn.
Yet all its fitful waters, clothed with night,
Lost heart not wholly, lacked not wholly light,
Seeing over life and death one star in sight

Where evening's gates as fair as morning's ope,
 Whose name was memory, but whose flame was hope.
 For all the tides of thought that rose and sank
 Felt its fair strength wherefrom strong sorrow shrank
 A mightier trust than time could change or cloy,
 More strong than sorrow, more secure than joy
 So came he, nor content nor all unblest,
 Back to the grey old land of Merlin's rest.

But ere six paces forth on shore he trod
 Before him stood a knight with feet unshod,
 And kneeling called upon him, as on God
 Might sick men call for pity, praying aloud
 With hands held up and head made bare and bowed,
 'Tristram, for God's love and thine own dear fame,
 I Tristram that am one with thee in name
 And one in heart with all that praise thee—I,
 Most woful man of all that may not die
 For heartbreak and the heavier scourge of shame,
 By all thy glory done our woful name
 Beseech thee, called of all men gentlest knight,
 Be now not slow to do my sorrows right.
 I charge thee for thy fame's sake through this land,
 I pray thee by thine own wife's fair white hand,
 Have pity of me whose love is borne away
 By one that makes of poor men's lives his prey,
 A felon masked with knighthood at his side
 Seven brethren hath he night or day to ride
 With seven knights more that wait on all his will
 And here at ~~land~~, ere yet one day fulfil
 Its flight through night and darkness, shall they fare
 Forth, and my bride among them, whom they bear

Through these wild lands his prisoner ; and if now
I lose her, and my prayer be vain, and thou
Less fain to serve love's servants than of yore,
Then surely shall I see her face no more.
But if thou wilt, for love's sake of the bride
Who lay most loved of women at thy side,
Strike with me, straight then hence behoves us ride
And rest between the moorside and the sea
Where we may smite them passing : but for me
Poor stranger, me not worthy scarce to touch
Thy kind strong hand, how shouldst thou do so much ?
For now lone left this long time waits thy wife
And lacks her lord and light of wedded life
Whilst thou far off art famous : yet thy fame,
If thou take pity on me that bear thy name
Unworthily, but by that name implore
Thy grace, how shall not even thy fame grow more ?
But be thy will as God's among us done,
Who art far in fame above us as the sun :
Yet only of him have all men help and grace.'

And all the lordly light of Tristram's face
Was softened as the sun's in kindly spring.
'Nay, then may God send me as evil a thing
When I give ear not to such prayers,' he said,
'And make my place among the nameless dead
When I put back one hour the time to smite
And do the unrighteous griefs of good men right.
Behold, I will not enter in nor rest
Here in mine own halls till this piteous quest
Find end ere noon to-morrow : but do thou,
Whose sister's face I may not look on now,

Go, Ganhardine, with tiding of the vow
That bids me turn aside for one day's strife
Or live dishonoured all my days of life,
And greet for me in brother's wise my wife,
And crave her pardon that for knighthood's sake
And womanhood's, whose bands may no man break
And keep the bands of bounden honour fast,
I seek not her till two nights yet be past
And this my quest accomplished, so God please
By me to give this young man's anguish ease
And on his wrongdoer's head his wrong requite.'

And Tristram with that woful thankful knight
Rode by the seaside moorland wastes away
Between the quickening night and darkening day
Ere half the gathering stars had heart to shine.
And lightly toward his sister Ganhardine
Sped, where she sat and gazed alone afar
Above the grey sea for the sunset star,
And lightly kissed her hand and lightly spake
His tiding of that quest for knighthood's sake.
And the white handed Iselt, bowing her head,
Gleamed on him with a glance athwart, and said,
'As God's on earth and far above the sun,
So toward his handmaid be my lord's will done.'
And doubts too dim to question or divine
Touched as with shade the spirit of Ganhardine,
Hearing, and scarce for half a doubtful breath
His bright light heart held half a thought of death
And knew not whence this darkling thought might be,
But surely not his sister's work for she

Was ever sweet and good as summer air,
And soft as dew when all the night is fair,
And gracious as the golden maiden moon
When darkness craves her blessing : so full soon
His mind was light again as leaping waves,
Nor dreamed that hers was like a field of graves
Where no man's foot dares swerve to left or right,
Nor ear dares hearken, nor dares eye take sight
Of aught that moves and murmurs there at night.

· But by the sea-banks where at morn their foes
Might find them, lay those knightly name-fellows,
One sick with grief of heart and sleepless, one
With heart of hope triumphant as the sun
Dreaming asleep of love and fame and fight :
But sleep at last wrapped warm the wan young knight ;
And Tristram with the first pale windy light
Woke ere the sun spake summons, and his ear
Caught the sea's call that fired his heart to hear,
A noise of waking waters : for till dawn
The sea was silent as a mountain lawn
When the wind speaks not, and the pines are dumb,
And summer takes her fill ere autumn come
Of life more soft than slumber : but ere day
Rose, and the first beam smote the bounding bay,
Up sprang the strength of the dark East, and took
With its wide wings the waters as they shook,
And hurled them huddling on ahead, and cast
The full sea shoreward with a great glad blast,
Blown from the heart of morning : and with joy
Full-souled and perfect passion, as a boy

That leaps up light to wrestle with the sea
For pure heart's gladness and large ecstasy,
Up sprang the might of Frisram, and his soul
Yearned for delight within him, and waxed whole
As a young child's with rapture of the hour
That brought his spirit and all the world to flower,
And all the bright blood in his veins beat time
To the wind's clarion and the water's chime
That called him and he followed it and stood
On the sand's verge before the grey great flood
Where the white hurthing heads of waves that met
Rose unsaluted of the sunrise yet.
And from his heart's root outward shot the sweet
Strong joy that thrilled him to the hands and feet,
Filling his limbs with pleasure and glad might,
And his soul drank the immeasurable delight
That earth drinks in with morning, and the free
Limitless love that lifts the stirring sea.
When on her bare bright bosom as a bride
She takes the young sun, perfect in his pride,
Home to his place with passion and the heart
Trembled for joy within the man whose part
Was here not least in living, and his mind
Was rapt abroad beyond man's meaner kind
And pierced with love of all things and with mirth
Moved to make one with heaven and heavenlike earth
And with the light live water So awhile
He watched the dim sea with a deepening smile,
And felt the sound and savour and swift flight
Of waves that fled beneath the fading night

And died before the darkness, like a song
With harps between and trumpets blown along
Through the loud air of some triumphant day,
Sink through his spirit and purge all sense away
Save of the glorious gladness of his hour
And all the world about to break in flower
Before the sovereign laughter of the sun ;
And he, ere night's wide work lay all undone,
As earth from her bright body casts off night,
Cast off his raiment for a rapturous fight
And stood between the sea's edge and the sea
Naked, and godlike of his mould as he
Whose swift foot's sound shook all the towers of Troy ;
So clothed with might, so girt upon with joy,
As, ere the knife had shorn to feed the fire
His glorious hair before the unkindled pyre
Whereon the half of his great heart was laid,
Stood, in the light of his live limbs arrayed,
Child of heroic earth and heavenly sea,
The flower of all men : scarce less bright than he,
If any of all men latter-born might stand,
Stood Tristram, silent, on the glimmering strand.
Not long : but with a cry of love that rang
As from a trumpet golden-mouthed, he sprang,
As toward a mother's where his head might rest
Her child rejoicing, toward the strong sea's breast
That none may gird nor measure : and his heart
Sent forth a shout that bade his lips not part,
But triumphed in him silent : no man's voice,
No song, no sound of clarions that rejoice,

Can set that glory forth which fills with fire
The body and soul that have their whole desire
Silent, and freer than birds or dreams are free
Take all their will of all the encountering sea.
And toward the foam he bent and forward smote,
Laughing, and launched his body like a boat
Full to the sea breach, and against the tide
Struck strongly forth with amorous arms made wide
To take the bright breast of the wave to his
And on his lips the sharp sweet minute's kiss
Given of the wave's lip for a breath's space curled
And pure as at the daydawn of the world,
And round him all the bright rough shuddering sea
Kindled, as though the world were even as he,
Heart stung with exultation of desire
And all the life that moved him seemed to aspire,
As all the sea's life toward the sun and still
Delight within him waxed with quickening will
More smooth and strong and perfect as a flame
That springs and spreads, till each glad limb became
A note of rapture in the tune of life,
Love music mild and keen as sleep and strife
Till the sweet change that bids the sense grow sure
Of deeper depth and purity more pure
Wrapped him and lapped him round with clearer cold,
And all the rippling green grew royal gold
Between him and the far sun's rising rim,
And like the sun his heart rejoiced in him,
And brightened with a broadening flame of mirth :
And hardly seemed its life a part of earth,

But the life kindled of a fiery birth
And passion of a new-begotten son
Between the live sea and the living sun.
And mightier grew the joy to meet full-faced
Each wave, and mount with upward plunge, and taste
The rapture of its rolling strength, and cross
Its flickering crown of snows that flash and toss
Like plumes in battle's blithest charge, and thence
To match the next with yet more strenuous sense ;
Till on his eyes the light beat hard and bade
His face turn west and shoreward through the glad
Swift revel of the waters golden-clad,
And back with light reluctant heart he bore
Across the broad-backed rollers in to shore ;
Strong-spirited for the chance and cheer of fight,
And donned his arms again, and felt the might
In all his limbs rejoice for strength, and praised
God for such life as that whereon he gazed,
And wist not surely its joy was even as fleet
As that which laughed and lapsed against his feet,
The bright thin grey foam-blossom, glad and hoar,
That flings its flower along the flowerless shore
On sand or shingle, and still with sweet strange snows,
As where one great white storm-dishevelled rose
May rain her wild leaves on a windy land,
Strews for long leagues the sounding slope of strand,
And flower on flower falls flashing, and anew
A fresh light leaps up whence the last flash flew,
And casts its brief glad gleam of life away
To fade not flowerwise but, as drops the day

Storm-smitten, when at once the dark devours
Heaven and the sea and earth with all their flowers ;
No star in heaven, on earth no rose to see, 2
But the white blown brief blossoms of the sea,
That make her green gloom sarnier than the sky,
Dance yet before the tempest's tune, and die.
And all these things he glanced upon, and knew
How far they shone, from earth's least flake of dew
To stretch of seas and imminence of skies,
Unwittingly, with unpresageful eyes,
For the last time. The world's half heavenly face,
The music of the silence of the place,
The confluence and the reflux of the sea,
The wind's note ringing over wold and lea,
Smote once more through him keen as fire that smote,
Rang once more through him one reverberate note,
That faded as he turned again and went,
Fulfilled by strenuous joy with strong content,
To take his last delight of labour done
That yet should be beholden of the sun
Or ever give man comfort of his hand.

Beside a wood's edge in the broken land
An hour at wait the twain together stood,
Till swift between the moorside and the wood
Flashed the spears forward of the coming train ,
And seeing beside the strong chief spoiler's rein
His wan love riding prisoner in the crew,
Forth with a cry the young man leapt, and flew
Right on that felon sudden as a flame ,
And hard at hand the mightier Tristram came,

Bright as the sun and terrible as fire :
And there had sword and spear their soul's desire,
And blood that quenched the spear's thirst as it poured
Slaked royally the hunger of the sword,
Till the fierce heart of steel could scarce fulfil
Its greed and ravin of insatiate will.
For three the fiery spear of Tristram drove
Down ere a point of theirs his harness clove
Or its own sheer mid shaft splintered in twain ;
And his heart bounded in him, and was fain
As fire or wind that takes its fill by night
Of tempest and of triumph : so the knight
Rejoiced and ranged among them, great of hand,
Till seven lay slain upon the heathery sand
Or in the dense breadth of the woodside fern.
Nor did his heart not mightier in him burn
Seeing at his hand that young knight fallen, and high
The red sword reared again that bade him die.
But on the slayer exulting like the flame
Whose foot foreshines the thunder Tristram came
Raging, for piteous wrath had made him fire ;
And as a lion's look his face was dire
That flashed against his foeman ere the sword
Lightened, and wrought the heart's will of its lord,
And clove through casque and crown the wrongdoer's
head.
And right and left about their dark chief dead
Hurtled and hurled those felons to and fro,
Till as a storm-wind scatters leaves and snow

His right hand ravening scattered them , but one
That fled with sidelong glance athwart the sun
Shot, and the shaft flew sure, and smote aghast,
Full in the wound a print of his great first fight
When at his young strength's peril he made free
Cornwall, and slew beside its bordering sea
The fair land's foe, who yielding up his breath
Yet left him wounded nigh to dark slow death.
And hardly with long toil thence he won home
Between the grey moor and the glimmering foam,
And halting fared through his own gate, and fell,
Thursting for as the sleepless fire of hell
The fire within him of his wound again
Burned, and his face was dark as death for pain,
And blind the blithe light of his eyes but they
Within that watched and wist not of the fray
Came forth and cried aloud on him for woe
And scarce aloud his thanks fell faint and slow
As men reared up the strong man fallen and bore
Down the deep hall that looked along the shore,
And laid him soft abed, and sought in vain
If herb or hard of leech might heal his pain.
And the white-handed Iscalt hearkening heard
All, and drew nigh, and spake no wisely word,
But gazed upon him doubtfully, with eyes
Clouded , and he in kindly knightly wise
Spake with scant breath, and smiling ' Surely this
Is penance for discourteous lips to kiss
And feel the brand burn through them, here to lie
And lack the strength here to do more than sigh

And hope not hence for pardon.' Then she bowed
Her head, still silent as a stooping cloud,
And laid her lips against his face ; and he
Felt sink a shadow across him as the sea
Might feel a cloud stoop toward it : and his heart
Darkened as one that wastes by sorcerous art
And knows not whence it withers : and he turned
Back from her emerald eyes his own, and yearned
All night for eyes all golden : and the dark
Hung sleepless round him till the loud first lark
Rang record forth once more of darkness done,
And all things born took comfort from the sun.

IX.

THE SAILING OF THE SWAN.

FATE, that was born ere spirit and flesh were made,
The fire that fills man's life with light and shade ;
The power beyond all godhead which puts on
All forms of multitudinous unison,
A raiment of eternal change inwrought
With shapes and hues more subtly spun than thought,
Where all things old bear fruit of all things new
And one deep chord throbs all the music through,
The chord of change unchanging, shadow and light
Inseparable as reverberate day from night ;
Fate, that of all things save the soul of man
Is lord and God since body and soul began ;
Fate, that keeps all the tune of things in chime ;
Fate, that breathes power upon the lips of time ;
That smites and soothes with heavy and healing hand
All joys and sorrows born in life's dim land,
Till joy be found a shadow and sorrow a breath
And life no discord in the tune with death,
But all things fain alike to die and live
In pulse and lapse of tides alternative,

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Through silence and through sound of peace and strife,
 Till birth and death be one in sight of life,
 Fate, heard and seen of no man's eyes or ears,
 To no man shown through light of smiles or tears,
 And moved of no man's prayer to fold its wings,
 Fate, that is night and light on worldly things,
 Fate, that is fire to burn and sea to drown,
 Strength to build up and thunder to cast down,
 Fate, shield and screen for each man's lifelong head,
 And sword at last or dart that strikes it dead,
 Fate, higher than heaven and deeper than the grave,
 That saves and spares not, spares and doth not save,
 Fate, that in gods' wise is not bought and sold
 For prayer or price of penitence or gold,
 Whose law shall live when life bids earth farewell
 Whose justice hath for shadows heaven and hell,
 Whose judgment into no god's hand is given
 Nor is its doom not more than hell or heaven
 Fate, that is pure of love and clean of hate,
 Being equal-eyed as nought may be but fate,
 Through many and weary days of soiled desire
 Leads life to rest where tears no more take fire,
 Through many and weary dreams of quenched delight
 Leads life through death past sense of day and night.

Nor shall they feel or fear, whose date is done,
 Aught that made once more dark the living sun
 And bitterer in their breathing lips the breath
 Than the dark dawn and bitter dust of death.
 For all the light, with fragrance as of flowers,
 That clothes the lithe live limbs of separate hours,

More sweet to savour and more clear to sight
Dawns on the soul death's undivided night.
No vigils has that perfect night to keep,
No fever-fits of vision shake that sleep.
Nor if they wake, and any place there be
Wherein the soul may feel her wings beat free
Through air too clear and still for sound or strife ;
If life were haply death, and death be life ;
If love with yet some lovelier laugh revive,
And song relume the light it bore alive,
And friendship, fount of all earth's gifts most good,
Stand perfect in perpetual brotherhood ;
If aught indeed at all of all this be,
Though none might say nor any man might see,
Might he that sees the shade thereof not say
This dream were trustier than the truth of day.
Nor haply may not hope, with heart more clear,
Burn deathward, and the doubtful soul take cheer,
Seeing through the channelled darkness yearn a star
Whose eyebeams are not as the morning's are,
Transient, and subjugate of lordlier light,
But all unconquerable by noon or night,
Being kindled only of life's own inmost fire,
Truth, stablished and made sure by strong desire,
Fountain of all things living, source and seed,
Force that perforce transfigures dream to deed,
God that begets on time, the body of death,
Eternity : nor may man's darkening breath,
Albeit it stain, disfigure or destroy
The glass wherein the soul sees life and joy

Only, with strength renewed and spirit of youth,
 And brighter than the sun's the body of Truth
 Eternal, unimaginable of man,
 Whose very face not Thought's own eyes may scan,
 But see far off his radiant feet at least,
 Trampling the head of Fear, the false high priest,
 Whose broken chalice foams with blood no more,
 And prostrate on that high priest's chancel floor,
 Bruised, overthrown, blind, maimed, with bloodless rod,
 The miscreation of his miscreant God.
 That sovereign shadow cast of souls that dwell
 In darkness and the prison-house of hell
 Whose walls are built of deadly dread, and bound
 The gates thereof with dreams as iron round,
 And all the bars therein and stanchions wrought
 Of shadow forged like steel and tempered thought
 And words like swords and thunder clouded creeds
 And oaths more dire than sun's most dreadful deeds
 That shade accursed and worshipped, which hath made
 The soul of man that brought it forth a shade
 Black as the womb of darkness, void and vain,
 A throne for fear, a pasturage for pain,
 Impotent, abject, clothed upon with lies,
 A foul blind fume of words and prayers that rise,
 Aghast and harsh, abhorrent and abhorred,
 Fierce as its God, blood saturate as its Lord,
 With loves and mercies on its lips that hiss
 Comfort, and kill compassion with a kiss,
 And strike the world black with their blasting breath,
 That ghost whose core of life is very death

And all its light of heaven a shadow of hell,
Fades, falls, wanes, withers by none other spell
But theirs whose eyes and ears have seen and heard
Not the face naked, not the perfect word,
But the bright sound and feature felt from far
Of life which feeds the spirit and the star,
Thrills the live light of all the suns that roll,
And stirs the still sealed springs of every soul.

Three dim days through, three slumberless nights
long,

Perplexed at dawn, oppressed at evensong,
The strong man's soul now sealed indeed with pain,
And all its springs half dried with drought, had lain
Prisoner within the fleshly dungeon-dress
Sore chafed and wasted with its weariness.
And fain it would have found the star, and fain
Made this funereal prison-house of pain
A watch-tower whence its eyes might sweep, and see
If any place for any hope might be
Beyond the hells and heavens of sleep and strife,
Or any light at all of any life
Beyond the dense false darkness woven above,
And could not, lacking grace to look on love.
And in the third night's dying hour he spake,
Seeing scarce the seals that bound the dayspring
break

And scarce the daystar burn above the sea :
'O Ganhardine, my brother true to me,
I charge thee by those nights and days we knew
No great while since in England, by the dew

That bathed those nights with blessing, and the fire
 That thrilled those days as music thrills a lyre,
 Do now for me perchance the last good deed
 That ever love may crave or life may need
 Ere love lay life in ashes take to thee
 My ship that shows aloft against the sea
 Carved on her stem the semblance of a swan,
 And ere the waves at even again wax wan
 Pass, if it may be, to my lady's land,
 And give this ring into her secret hand,
 And bid her think how hard on death I lie,
 And fain would look upon her face and die
 But as a merchant's laden be the bark
 With royal ware for freightage, that King Mark
 May take for toll thereof some costly thing,
 And when this gift finds grace before the king,
 Choose forth a cup, and put therein my ring
 Where surest only of one it may be seen,
 And bid her handmaid bear it to the queen
 For earnest of thine homage then shall she
 Fear, and take counsel privily with thee,
 To know what errand there is thine from me
 And what my need in secret of her sight.
 But make thee two sails, one like sea foam white
 To spread for signal if thou bring her back,
 And if she come not see the sail be black,
 That I may know or ever thou take land
 If these my lips may die upon her hand
 Or hers may never more be mixed with mine.'

And his heart quailed for grief in Ganhardine,

Hearing ; and all his brother bade he swore
Surely to do, and straight fare forth from shore.
But the white-handed Iseult hearkening heard
All, and her heart waxed hot, and every word
Thereon seemed graven and printed in her thought
As lines with fire and molten iron wrought.
And hard within her heavy heart she cursed
Both, and her life was turned to fiery thirst,
And all her soul was hunger, and its breath
Of hope and life a blast of raging death.
For only in hope of evil was her life.
So bitter burned within the unchilded wife
A virgin lust for vengeance, and such hate
Wrought in her now the fervent work of fate.

Then with a south-west wind the Swan set forth,
And over wintering waters bore to north,
And round the wild land's windy westward end
Up the blown channel bade her bright way bend
East on toward high Tintagel : where at dark
Landing, fair welcome found they of King Mark,
And Ganhardine with Brangwain as of old
Spake, and she took the cup of chiselled gold
Wherein lay secret Tristram's trothplight ring,
And bare it un beholden of the king
Even to her lady's hand, which hardly took
A gift whereon a queen's eyes well might look,
With grace forlorn of weary gentleness.
But, seeing, her life leapt in her, keen to guess
The secret of the symbol : and her face
Flashed bright with blood whence all its grief-worn
grace

Took fire and kindled to the quivering hair
 And in the dark soft hour of starkest air
 Thrilled through with sense of midnight, when the
 world

Feels the wide wings of sleep about it furled,
 Down stole the queen, deep-muffled to her wan
 Mute restless lips, and came where yet the Swan
 Swung fast at anchor whence by starlight she
 Housed snowbright sails, and took the glimmering sea.

But all the long night long more keen and sore
 His wound's grief waxed in Tristram evermore,
 And heavier always hung his heart away
 Between dim fear and clouded hope of day
 And still with face and heart at silent strife
 Beside him watched the maiden called his wife,
 Patient, and spake not save when scarce he spake,
 Murmuring with sense distraught and spint awake
 Speech bitterer than the words thereof were sweet
 And hatred thrilled her to the hands and feet,
 Listening for alway back reiterate came
 The passionate faint burden of her name.
 Nor ever through the labouring lips astir
 Came any word of any thought of her
 But the soul wandering struggled and clung hard
 Only to dreams of joy in Joyous Gard
 Or wildwood nights beside the Cornish strand,
 Or Merlin's holier sleep here hard at hand
 Wrapped round with deep soft spells in dim
 Brocelande.

And with such thirst as joy's drained wine-cup leaves

When fear to hope as hope to memory cleaves
His soul desired the dewy sense of leaves,
The soft green smell of thickets drenched with dawn,
The faint slot kindling on the fiery lawn
As day's first hour made keen the spirit again
That lured and spurred on quest his hound Hodain,
The breeze, the bloom, the splendour and the sound,
That stung like fire the hunter and the hound,
The pulse of wind, the passion of the sea,
The rapture of the woodland : then would he
Sigh, and as one that fain would all be dead
Heavily turn his heavy-laden head
Back, and close eyes for comfort, finding none.
And fain he would have died or seen the sun,
Being sick at heart of darkness : yet afresh
Began the long strong strife of spirit and flesh
And branching pangs of thought whose branches
bear

The bloodred fruit whose core is black, despair.
And the wind slackened and again grew great,
Palpitant as men's pulses palpitate
Between the flowing and ebbing tides of fate
That wash their lifelong waifs of weal and woe
Through night and light and twilight to and fro.
Now as a pulse of hope its heartbeat throbbed,
Now like one stricken shrank and sank and sobbed,
Then, yearning as with child of death, put forth
A wail that filled the night up south and north
With woful sound of waters : and he said,
' So might the wind wail if the world were dead

And its wings wandered over nought but sea.
 I would I knew she would not come to me,
 For surely she will come not then should I,
 Once knowing I shall not look upon her, die.
 I knew not life could so long breathe such breath
 As I do Nay, what grief were this, if death,
 The sole sure friend of whom the whole world saith
 He lies not, nor hath ever this been said,
 That death would heal not grief—if death were dead
 And all ways closed whence grief might pass with life!

Then softly spake his watching virgin wife
 Out of her heart, deep down below her breath
 'Fear not but death shall come—and after death
 Judgment.' And he that heard not answered her,
 Saying—'Ah, but one there was, if truth not err,
 For true men's trustful tongues have said it—one
 Whom these mine eyes knew living while the sun
 Looked yet upon him, and mine own ears heard
 The deep sweet sound once of his godlike word—
 Who sleeps and dies not, but with soft live breath
 Takes always all the deep delight of death,
 Through love's gift of a woman but for me
 Love's hand is not the hand of Nimue,
 Love's word no still smooth murmur of the dove,
 No kiss of peace for me the kiss of love.
 Nor, whatsoever thy life's love ever give,
 Dear, shall it ever bid me sleep or live,
 Nor from thy brows and lips and living breast
 As his from Nimue's shall my soul take rest,
 Not rest but unrest hath our long love given—
 Unrest on earth that wins not rest in heaven.

What rest may we take ever? what have we
Had ever more of peace than has the sea?
Has not our life been as a wind that blows
Through lonelier lands than rear the wild white rose
That each year sees requickened, but for us
Time once and twice hath here or there done thus
And left the next year following empty and bare?
What rose hath our last year's rose left for heir,
What wine our last year's vintage? and to me
More were one fleet forbidden sense of thee,
One perfume of thy present grace, one thought
Made truth one hour, ere all mine hours be nought,
One very word, breath, look, sign, touch of hand,
Than all the green leaves in Broceliande
Full of sweet sound, full of sweet wind and sun;
O God, thou knowest I would no more but one,
I would no more but once more ere I die
Find thus much mercy. Nay, but then were I
Happier than he whom there thy grace hath found,
For thine it must be, this that wraps him round,
Thine only, albeit a fiend's force gave him birth,
Thine that has given him heritage on earth
Of slumber-sweet eternity to keep
Fast in soft hold of everliving sleep.
Happier were I, more sinful man, than he,
Whom one love-worthier then than Nimue
Should with a breath make blest among the dead.'

And the wan wedded maiden answering said,
Soft as hate speaks within itself apart:
'Surely ye shall not, ye that rent mine heart,

With love for lamp to light us out of life.'

And on that word his wedded maiden wife,
 Pale as the moon in star forsaken skies
 Ere the sun fill them, rose with set strange eyes
 And gazed on him that saw not and her heart
 Heaved as a man's death smitten with a dart
 That smites him sleeping, warm and full of life
 So toward her lord that was not looked his wife,
 His wife that was not and her heart within
 Burnt bitter like an aftertaste of sin
 To one whose memory drinks and loathes the lee
 Of shame or sorrow deeper than the sea
 And no fear touched him of her eyes above
 And ear that hoarded each poor word whence love
 Made sweet the broken music of his breath.
 'Isult, my life that wast art and my death,
 My life in life that hast been, and that art
 Death in my death, sole wound that cleaves mine heart,
 Mine heart that else, how spent soe'er, were whole,
 Breath of my spirit and anguish of my soul,
 How can this be that hence thou canst not bear,
 Being but by space divided? One is here,
 But one of twain I looked at once to see,
 Shall death keep time and thou not keep with me?'

And the white married maiden laughed at heart,
 Hearing, and scarce with lips at all apart
 Spoke, and as fire between them was her breath,
 'Yea, now thou hast not yea, for I am death.'

By this might eyes that watched without behold
 Deep in the gulfs of aching air acold

The roses of the dawning heaven that strew
The low soft sun's way ere his power shine through
And burn them up with fire : but far to west
Had sunk the dead moon on the live sea's breast,
Slain as with bitter fear to see the sun :
And eastward was a strong bright wind begun
Between the clouds and waters : and he said,
Seeing hardly through dark dawn her doubtful head,
'Iseult?' and like a death-bell faint and clear
The virgin voice rang answer—'I am here.'
And his heart sprang, and sank again : and she
Spake, saying, 'What would my knightly lord with me?'
And Tristram : 'Hath my lady watched all night
Beside me, and I knew not? God requite
Her love for comfort shown a man nigh dead.'

'Yea, God shall surely guerdon it,' she said,
'Who hath kept me all my days through to this hour.'

And Tristram : 'God alone hath grace and power
To pay such grace toward one unworthier shown
Than ever durst, save only of God alone,
Crave pardon yet and comfort, as I would
Crave now for charity if my heart were good,
But as a coward's it fails me, even for shame.'

Then seemed her face a pale funereal flame
That burns down slow by midnight, as she said :
'Speak, and albeit thy bidding spake me dead,
God's love renounce me if it were not done.'

And Tristram : 'When the sea-line takes the sun
That now should be not far off sight from far,
Look if there come not with the morning star

My ship bound hither from the northward back,
And if the sail be white thereof or black.'

And knowing the soothfast sense of his desire
So sore the heart within her raged like fire
She could not wring forth of her lips a word,
But bowing made sign how humbly had she heard.
And the sign given made light his heart, and she
Set her face hard against the yearning sea
Now all athirst with trembling trust of hope
To see the sudden gates of sunrise ope,
But thirstier yearned the heart whose fiery gate
Lay wide that vengeance might come in to hate
And Tristram lay at thankful rest, and thought
Now surely life nor death could grieve him aught,
Since past was now life's anguish as a breath,
And surely past the bitterness of death
For seeing he had found at these her hands this grace,
It could not be but yet some breathing space
Might leave him life to look again on love's own face.
'Since if for death's sake,' in his heart he said,
'Even she take pity upon me quick or dead,
How shall not even from God's hand be compassion
shed?

For night bears dawn, how weak soe'er and wan,
And sweet ere death, men fable, sings the swan.
So seems the Swan my signal from the sea
To sound a song that sweetens death to me
Clasped round about with radiance from above
Of dawn, and closer clasped on earth by love.

Shall all things brighten, and this my sign be dark ?'

And high from heaven suddenly rang the lark,
Triumphant ; and the far first reflux ray
Filled all the hollow darkness full with day.
And on the deep sky's verge a fluctuant light
Gleamed, grew, shone, strengthened into perfect sight,
As bowed and dipped and rose again the sail's clear
white.

And swift and steadfast as a sea-mew's wing
It neared before the wind, as fain to bring
Comfort, and shorten yet its narrowing track.
And she that saw looked hardly toward him back,
Saying, ' Ay, the ship comes surely ; but her sail is
black.'

And fain he would have sprung upright, and seen,
And spoken : but strong death struck sheer between,
And darkness closed as iron round his head :
And smitten through the heart lay Tristram dead.

And scarce the word had flown abroad, and wail
Risen, ere to shoreward came the snowbright sail,
And lightly forth leapt Ganhardine on land,
And led from ship with swift and reverent hand
Iseult : and round them up from all the crowd
Broke the great wail for Tristram out aloud.
And ere her ear might hear her heart had heard,
Nor sought she sign for witness of the word ;
But came and stood above him newly dead,
And felt his death upon her : and her head
Bowed, as to reach the spring that slakes all drouth ;
And their four lips became one silent mouth.

So came their hour on them that were in life
 Tristram and Iseult so from love and strife
 The stroke of love's own hand felt last and best
 Gave them deliverance to perpetual rest
 So, crownless of the wreaths that life had wound,
 They slept, with flower of tenderer comfort crowned :
 From bondage and the fear of time set free,
 And all the yoke of space on earth and sea
 Cast as a curb for ever nor might now
 Fear and desire bid soar their souls or bow,
 Lift up their hearts or break them doubt nor grief
 More now might move them, dread nor disbelief
 Touch them with shadowy cold or fiery sting,
 Nor sleepless languor with its weary wing,
 Nor harsh estrangement, born of time's vain breath,
 Nor change, a darkness deeper far than death.
 And round the sleep that fell around them then
 Earth lies not wrapped, nor records wrought of men
 Rise up for timeless token but their sleep
 Hath round it like a raiment all the deep,
 No change or gleam or gloom of sun and rain,
 But all time long the might of all the main
 Spread round them as round earth soft heaven is
 spread,
 And peace more strong than death round all the dead.

For death is of an hour, and after death
Peace : nor for aught that fear or fancy saith,
Nor even for very love's own sake, shall strife
Perplex again that perfect peace with life.
And if, as men that mourn may deem or dream,
Rest haply here than there might sweeter seem,
And sleep, that lays one hand on all, more good
By some sweet grave's grace given of wold or wood
Or clear high glen or sunbright wind-worn down
Than where life thunders through the trampling town
With daylong feet and nightlong overhead,
What grave may cast such grace round any dead,
What so sublime sweet sepulchre may be
For all that life leaves mortal, as the sea?
And these, rapt forth perforce from earthly ground,
These twain the deep sea guards. and girdles round
Their sleep more deep than any sea's gulf lies,
Though changeless with the change in shifting skies,
Nor mutable with seasons : for the grave
That held them once, being weaker than a wave,
The waves long since have buried : though their tomb
Was royal that by ruth's relenting doom
Men gave them in Tintagel : for the word
Took wing which thrilled all piteous hearts that heard
The word wherethrough their lifelong lot stood shown,
And when the long sealed springs of fate were known,
The blind bright innocence of lips that quaffed
Love, and the marvel of the mastering draught,

And all the fraughtage of the fateful bark,
 Loud like a child upon them wept King Mark,
 Seeing round the sword's hilt which long since had
 fought

For Cornwall's love a scroll of writing wrought,
 A scripture writ of Tristram's hand, wherein
 Lay bare the sinless source of all their sin,
 No choice of will, but chance and sorcerous art,
 With prayer of him for pardon and his heart
 Was molten in him, wailing as he kissed
 Each with the kiss of kinship—' Had I wist,
 Ye had never sinned nor died thus, nor had I
 Borne in this doom that bade you sin and die
 So sore a part of sorrow ' And the king
 Built for their tomb a chapel bright like sprung
 With flower soft wealth of branching tracery made
 Fair as the frondage each fleet year sees fade,
 That should not fall till many a year were done.
 There slept they wedded under moon and sun
 And change of stars and through the casements came
 Midnight and noon girt round with shadow and flame
 To illumine their grave or veil it till at last
 On these things too was doom as darkness cast
 For the strong sea hath swallowed wall and tower,
 And where their limbs were laid in woful hour
 For many a fathom gleams and moves and moans
 The tide that sweeps above their confined bones
 In the wrecked chancel by the shivered shrine
 Nor where they sleep shall moon or sunlight shine

Nor man look down for ever : none shall say,
Here once, or here, Tristram and Iseult lay :
But peace they have that none may gain who live,
And rest about them that no love can give,
And over them, while death and life shall be,
The light and sound and darkness of the sea.

ATHENS :

AN ODE.

ERE from under earth again like fire the violet
 kindle, [Str. 1.
 Ere the holy buds and hoar on olive-branches
 bloom,
 Ere the crescent of the last pale month of winter
 dwindle,
 Shrink, and fall as falls a dead leaf on the dead
 month's tomb,
 Round the hills whose heights the first-born olive-
 blossom brightened,
 Round the city brow-bound once with violets like
 a bride,
 Up from under earth again a light that long since
 lightened
 Breaks, whence all the world took comfort as all
 time takes pride.
 Pride have all men in their fathers that were free
 before them,
 In the warriors that begat us free-born pride have
 we :

But the fathers of their spirits, how may men adore
them,

With what rapture may we praise, who bade our
souls be free?

Sons of Athens born in spirit and truth are all born
free men ,

Most of all, we, nurtured where the north wind
holds his reign

Children all we sea folk of the Salaminian seamen,

Sons of them that beat back Persia they that beat
back Spain

Since the songs of Greece fell silent, none like ours
have risen ,

Since the sails of Greece fell slack, no ships have
sailed like ours ,

How should we lament not, if her spirit sit in prison?

How should we rejoice not, if her wreaths renew
their flowers?

f All the world is sweeter, if the Athenian violet
quicken

k All the world is brighter, if the Athenian sun
return

All things foul on earth wax fainter, by that sun's
light stricken

All ill growths are withered, where those fragrant
flower lights burn.

All the wandering waves of seas with all their warning
waters

Roll the record on for ever of the sea fight there,

When the capes were battle's lists, and all the straits
 were slaughter's,
 And the myriad Medes as foam-flakes on the
 scattering air.
 Ours the lightning was that cleared the north and lit
 the nations,
 But the light that gave the whole world light of old
 was she :
 Ours an age or twain, but hers are endless genera-
 tions :
 All the world is hers at heart, and most of all are
 we.

Ye that bear the name about you of her glory, [*Ant.* 1.
 Men that wear the sign of Greeks upon you
 sealed,

Yours is yet the choice to write yourselves in story
 Sons of them that fought the Marathonian field.

{ Slaves of no man were ye, said your warrior poet,
 Neither subject unto man as underlings :

Yours is now the season here wherein to show it,
 If the seed ye be of them that knew not kings.

If ye be not, swords nor words alike found brittle

From the dust of death to raise you shall prevail :

Subject swords and dead men's words may stead you
 little,

If their old king-hating heart within you fail.

If your spirit of old, and not your bonds, be broken,

If the kingless heart be molten in your breasts,

By what signs and wonders, by what word or token,
 Shall ye drive the vultures from your eagles' nests?
 All the gains of tyrants Freedom counts for losses,
 Nought of all the work done holds she worth the
 work,

When the slaves whose faith is set on crowns and
 crosses

Drive the Cossack bear against the tiger Turk.
 Neither cross nor crown nor crescent shall ye bow to,
 Nought of Araby nor Jewry, priest nor king
 As your watchword was of o'd, so be it now too
 As from lips long stilled, from yours let healing
 spring.

Through the fights of old, your battle-cry was healing
 And the Saviour that ye called on was the Sun
 Dawn by dawn behold in heaven your God, revealing
 Light from darkness as when Marathon was won.
 Gods were yours yet strange to Turk or Galilean,
 Light and Wisdom only then as gods adored
 Pallas was your shield, your comforter was Pæan,
 From your bright world's navel spake the Sun your
 Lord.

Though the names be lost, and changed the signs
 of Light and Wisdom be, [E] 1
 By these only shall men conquer, by these only be set
 free
 When the whole world's eye was Athens, these were
 yours, and theirs were ye.

Light was given you of your wisdom, light ye gave the
world again :

As the sun whose godhead lightened on her soul was
Hellas then :

Yea, the least of all her children as the chosen of
other men.

Change your hearts not with your garments, nor your
faith with creeds that change :

Truth was yours, the truth which time and chance
transform not nor estrange :

Purer truth nor higher abides not in the reach of
time's whole range.

Gods are they in all men's memories and for all time's
periods,

They that hurled the host back seaward which had
scourged the sea with rods :

Gods for us are all your fathers, even the least of
these as gods.

In the dark of days the thought of them is with us,
strong to save,

They that had no lord, and made the Great King
lesser than a slave ;

They that rolled all Asia back on Asia, broken like a
wave.

No man's men were they, no master's and no God's
but these their own :

Gods not loved in vain nor served amiss, nor all yet
overthrown :

Love of country, Freedom, Wisdom, Light, and none
save these alone.

King by king came up against them, sire and son,
and turned to flee
Host on host roared westward, mightier each than
each, if more might be
Field to field made answer, clamorous like as wave to
wave at sea.
Strife to strife responded, loud as rocks to clangorous
rocks respond
Where the deep rings wreck to seamen held in tem-
pest's thrall and bond,
Till when war's bright work was perfect peace as
radiant rose beyond
Peace made bright with fruit of battle, stronger made
for storm gone down,
With the flower of song held heavenward for the
violet of her crown
Woven about the fragrant forehead of the fosteress
maiden's town.
Gods arose alive on earth from under stroke of human
hands
As the hands that wrought them, these are dead, and
mixed with time's dead sands
But the godhead of supernal song, though these now
stand not, stands
Pallas is not, Phoebus breathes no more in breathing
brass or gold
Clytemnestra towers, Cassandra wails, for ever
Time is bold,
But not heart nor hand hath he to unwrite the scrip-
tures writ of old.

Dead the great chryselephantine God, as dew last
evening shed :

Dust of earth or foam of ocean is the symbol of his
head :

Earth and ocean shall be shadows when Prometheus
shall be dead.

Fame around her warriors living rang through Greece
and lightened, [Str. 2.

Moving equal with their stature, stately with their
strength :

Thebes and Lacedæmon at their breathing presence
brightened,

Sense or sound of them filled all the live land's
breadth and length.

All the lesser tribes put on the pure Athenian fashion,
One Hellenic heart was from the mountains to the
sea :

Sparta's bitter self grew sweet with high half-human
passion,

And her dry thorns flushed aflower in strait Ther-
mopylæ.

Fruitless yet the flowers had fallen, and all the deeds
died fruitless,

Save that tongues of after men, the children of her
peace,

Took the tale up of her glories, transient else and
rootless,

And in ears and hearts of all men left the praise of
Greece.

Fair the war time was when still, as beacon answering
beacon,
Sea to land flashed fight, and thundered note of
wrath or cheer,
But the strength of noonday might hath power to
waste and weaken,
Nor may light be passed from hand to hand of
year to year
If the dying deed be saved not, ere it die for ever,
By the hands and lips of men more wise than years
are strong,
If the soul of man take heed not that the deed die
never,
Clothed about with purple and gold of story,
crowned with song.
Still the burning heart of boy and man alike rejoices,
Hearing words which made it seem of old for all
who sang
That their heaven of heavens waxed happier when
from free men's voices
Well beloved Harmodius and Aristogiton rang
Never fell such fragrance from the flower month's
rose red kirtle
As from chaplets on the bright friends' brows who
slew their lord
Greener grew the leaf and balmy blew the flower of
myrtle
When its blossom sheathed the sheer tyrannical
sword.

None so glorious garland crowned the feast Panathe-
næan

As this wreath too frail to fetter fast the Cyprian
dove :

None so fiery song sprang sunwards annual as the
pæan

Praising perfect love of friends and perfect country's
love.

Higher than highest of all those heavens wherefrom
the starry [Ant. 2.

Song of Homer shone above the rolling fight,
Gleams like spring's green bloom on boughs all gaunt
and gnarry

Soft live splendour as of flowers of foam in flight,
Glow's a glory of mild-winged maidens upward mount-
ing

Sheer through air made shrill with strokes of smooth
swift wings

Round the rocks beyond foot's reach, past eyesight's
counting,

Up the cleft where iron wind of winter rings
Round a God fast clenched in iron jaws of fetters,

Him who culled for man the fruitful flower of fire,
Bared the darkling scriptures writ in dazzling letters,

Taught the truth of dreams deceiving men's desire,
Gave their water-wandering chariot-seats of ocean

Wings, and bade the rage of war-steeds champ the
rein,

Showed the symbols of the wild birds' wheeling
motion,

Waged for man's sake war with God and all his
train.

Earth, whose name was also Righteousness, a mother

Many named and single natured, gave him breath

Whence God's wrath could wring but this word and
none other—

He may smite me, yet he shall not do to death

Him the tongue that sang triumphant while tormented

Sang as loud the sevenfold storm that roared ere-
while

Round the towers of Thebes till wrath might rest
contented

Sang the flight from smooth soft sanded banks of
Nile,

When like mateless doves that fly from snare or
tether

Came the suppliants landwards trembling as they
trod,

And the prayer took wing from all their tongues
together—

King of kings, most holy of holies, blessed God

But what mouth may chant again, what heart may
know it,

All the rapture that all hearts of men put on

When of Salamis the time transcending poe

Sang, whose hand had chased the Mede at Marathon?

Darker dawned the song with stormier wings above
the watch-fire spread [Ep. 2.
Whence from Ida toward the hill of Hermes leapt the
light that said
Troy was fallen, a torch funereal for the king's tri-
umphal head.
Dire indeed the birth of Leda's womb that had God's
self to sire
Bloomed, a flower of love that stung the soul with
fangs that gnaw like fire :
But the twin-born human-fathered sister-flower bore
fruit more dire.
Scarce the cry that called on airy heaven and all swift
winds on wing,
Wells of river-heads, and countless laugh of waves
past reckoning,
Earth which brought forth all, and the orbèd sun that
looks on everything,
Scarce that cry fills yet men's hearts more full of
heart-devouring dread
Than the murderous word said mocking, how the
child whose blood he shed
Might clasp fast and kiss her father where the dead
salute the dead.
But the latter note of anguish from the lips that
mocked her lord,
When her son's hand bared against the breast that
suckled him his sword,
How might man endure, O Æschylus, to hear it and
record?

How might man endure, being mortal yet, O thou
most highest, to hear?

How record, being born of woman? Surely not toy
Furies near,

Surely thus beheld, this only, blasted hearts to death
with fear

Not the hissing hair, nor flakes of blood that oored
from eyes of fire,

Nor the snort of savage sleep that snuffed the hunger-
ing heart's desire

Where the hunted prey found hardly space and har-
bour to respire ,

She whose likeness called them—'Sleep ye, ho?
what need of you that sleep?'

(Ah, what need indeed, where she was, of all shapes
that night may keep

Hidden dark as death and deeper than men's dreams
of hell are deep?)

She the murderess of her husband, she the huntress
of her son,

More than ye was she, the shadow that no God with
stands but one,

Wisdom equal-eyed and stronger and more splendid
than the sun.

Yea, no God may stand betwixt us and the shadows
of our deeds,

Nor the light of dreams that lighten darkness, nor the
prayer that pleads,

But the wisdom equal souled with heaven, the light
alone that leads.

Light whose law bids home those childless children
 of eternal night,
 Soothed and reconciled and mastered and transmuted
 in men's sight
 Who behold their own souls, clothed with darkness
 once, now clothed with light.
 King of kings and father crowned of all our fathers
 crowned of yore,
 Lord of all the lords of song, whose head all heads
 bow down before,
 Glory be to thee from all thy sons in all tongues ever-
 more.

Rose and vine and olive and deep ivy-bloom en-
 twining [Str. 3.
 Close the goodliest grave that e'er they closeliest
 might entwine
 Keep the wind from wasting and the sun from too
 strong shining
 Where the sound and light of sweetest songs still
 float and shine.
 Here the music seems to illume the shade, the light
 to whisper
 Song, the flowers to put not odours only forth, but
 words
 Sweeter far than fragrance : here the wandering
 wreaths twine crisper
 Far, and louder far exults the note of all wild
 birds.

Thoughts that change us, joys that crown and sorrows
that enthrone us

Passions that enrobe us with a clearer air than ours,
Move and breathe as living things beheld round white
Colonus,

Andibler than melodies and visibler than flowers.
Love, in fight unconquered, Love, with spoils of great
men laden,

Never sang so sweet from throat of woman or of
dove
Love, whose bed by night is in the soft cheeks of a
maiden,

And his march is over seas, and low roofs lack not
Love,
Nor may one o' all that live, ephemeral or eternal,
Fly nor hide from Love, but whose clasps him
fast goes mad.

Never since the first born year with flowers first-born
grew vernal
Such a song made listening hearts of lovers glad or
sad.

Never sounded note so radiant at the rayless portal
Opening wide on the all-concealing lowland of the
dead

As the rousic mingling, when her doomsday marked
her mortal,

From her own and old men's voices round the
bride's way shed,
Round the grave her bride house, hevn for endless
habitation,

Where, shut out from sunshine, with no bridegroom
 by, she slept ;
 But beloved of all her dark and fateful generation,
 But with all time's tears and praise besprinkled and
 bewept :
 Well-beloved of outcast father and self-slaughtered
 mother,
 Born, yet unpolluted, of their blind incestuous
 bed ;
 Best-beloved of him for whose dead sake she died,
 her brother,
 Hallowing by her own life's gift her own born
 brother's head :

Not with wine or oil nor any less libation [Ant. 3.
 Hallowed, nor made sweet with humbler perfume's
 breath ;
 Not with only these redeemed from desecration,
 But with blood and spirit of life poured forth to
 death ;
 Blood unspotted, spirit unsullied, life devoted,
 Sister too supreme to make the bride's hope good,
 Daughter too divine as woman to be noted,
 Spouse of only death in mateless maidenhood.
 Yea, in her was all the prayer fulfilled, the saying
 All accomplished—*Would that fate would let me
 wear*

*Hallowed innocence of words and all deeds, weighing
 Well the laws thereof, begot on holier air,*

*Far on high sublimely stablished, whereof only
Heaven is father, nor did birth of mortal mould
Bring them forth, nor shall oblivion lull to lonely
Slumber Great in these is God, and grows not old.*
Therefore even that inner darkness where she
perished

Surely seems as holy and lovely, seen aright,
As desirable and as dearly to be cherished,
As the haunt closed in with laurels from the light,
Deep inwound with olive and wild vine inwoven,
Where a godhead known and unknown makes men
pale,

But the darkness of the twilight noon is cloven
Still with shrill sweet moan of many a nightingale
Closer clustering there they make sweet noise to-
gether,

Where the fearful gods look gentler than our fear,
And the grove thronged through with birds of holiest
feather

Grows nor pale nor dumb with sense of dark things
near

There her father, called upon with signs of wonder,
Passed with tenderest words away by ways un-
known,

Not by sea storm stricken down, nor touched of
thunder,

To the dark benign deep underworld, alone

Third of three that ruled in Athens, kings with
 sceptral song for staff, [Ep. 3.
 Gladdest heart that God gave ever milk and wine of
 thought to quaff,
 Clearest eye that lightened ever to the broad lip's
 lordliest laugh,
 Praise be thine as theirs whose tragic brows the loftier
 leaf engirds
 For the live and lyric lightning of thy honey-hearted
 words,
 Soft like sunny dewy wings of clouds and bright as
 crying of birds;
 Full of all sweet rays and notes that make of earth
 and air and sea
 One great light and sound of laughter from one great
 God's heart, to be
 Sign and semblance of the gladness of man's life
 where men breathe free.
 With no Loxian sound obscure God uttered once, and
 all time heard,
 All the soul of Athens, all the soul of England, in
 that word :
 Rome arose the second child of freedom : northward
 rose the third.
 Ere her Boreal dawn came kindling seas afoam and
 fields of snow,
 Yet again, while Europe groaned and grovelled, shone
 like suns aglow
 Doria splendid over Genoa, Venice bright with Dan-
 dolo.

Dead was Hellas, but Ausonia by the light of dead
men's deeds

Rose and walked awhile alive, though mocked as
whom the fen fire leads

By the creed wrought faith of faithless souls that
mock their doubts with creeds.

Dead are these, and man is risen again and haply
now the Three

Yet coequal and true may stand in story, marked as
free

By the token of the washing of the waters of the sea
Athens first of all earth's kindred many tongued and
many kinned

Had the sea to friend and comfort, and for kinsman
had the wind

She that bare Columbus next then she that made
her spoil of Ind.

She that hears not what man's rage but only what the
sea wind saith

She that turned Spain's ships to cloud-wrack at the
blasting of her breath,

By her strengths of strong souled children and of
strong winds done to death.

North and south the Great King's galleons went in
Persian wise and here

She, with Æschylean music on her lips that laughed
back fear,

In the face of Time's grey godhead shook the splen-
dour of her spear

Fair as Athens then with foot upon her foeman's
front, and strong
Even as Athens for redemption of the world from
sovereign wrong,
Like as Athens crowned she stood before the sun
with crowning song.
All the world is theirs with whom is freedom : first of
all the free,
Blest are they whom song has crowned and clothed
with blessing : these as we,
These alone have part in spirit with the sun that
crowns the sea.

April, 1881.

THE STATUE OF VICTOR HUGO.

I.

SINCE in Athens God stood plain for adoration,
 Since the sun beheld his likeness reared in stone,
 Since the bronze or gold of human consecration
 Gave to Greece her guardian's form and feature
 shown,
 Never hand of sculptor, never heart of nation,
 Found so glorious aim in all these ages flown
 As is theirs who rear for all time's acclamation
 Here the likeness of our mightiest and their own.

2.

Theirs and ours and all men's living who behold him
 Crowned with garlands multiform and manifold;
 Praise and thanksgiving of all mankind enfold him
 Who for all men casts abroad his gifts of gold.
 With the gods of song have all men's tongues enrolled
 him,
 With the helpful gods have all men's hearts en-
 rolled :

Ours he is who love him, ours whose hearts' hearts
 hold him
 Fast as his the trust that hearts like his may hold.

3

He, the heart most high, the spirit on earth most
 blameless,
 Takes in charge all spirits, holds all hearts in trust
 As the sea winds on the sea his ways are tameless,
 As the laws that steer the world his works are just.
 All most noble see! him nobler, all most shameless
 Feel his wrath and scorn make pale their pride and
 lust
 All most poor and lowliest, all whose wrongs were
 nameless,
 Feel his word of comfort raise them from the dust.

4

Pride of place and lust of empire bloody fruited
 Knew the blasting of his breath on leaf and fruit
 Now the hand that smote the death tree now dis-
 rooted
 Plants the refuge tree that has man's hope for root
 Ah but we by whom his darkness was saluted,
 How shall now all we that see his day salute?
 How should love not seem by love's own speech con-
 futed,
 Song before the sovereign singer not be mute?

5.

With what worship, by what blessing, in what measure,
May we sing of him, salute him, or adore,
With what hymn for praise, what thanksgiving for
pleasure,
Who had given us more than heaven, and gives us
more ?
Heaven's whole treasury, filled up full with night's
whole treasure,
Holds not so divine or deep a starry store
As the soul supreme that deals forth worlds at leisure
Clothed with light and darkness, dense with flower
and ore.

6.

Song had touched the bourn : fresh verses overflow it,
Loud and radiant, waves on waves on waves that
throng ;
Still the tide grows, and the sea-mark still below it
Sinks and shifts and rises, changed and swept along.
Rose it like a rock? the waters overthrow it,
And another stands beyond them sheer and strong :
Goal by goal pays down its prize, and yields its poet
Tribute claimed of triumph, palm achieved of song.

7.

Since his hand that holds the keys of fear and wonder
Opened on the high priest's dreaming eyes a door

Whence the lights of heaven and hell above and
under
Shone, and smote the face that men bow down
before,
Thrice again one singer's note had cloven in sunder
Night, who blows again not one blast now but four,
And the fourfold heaven is kindled with his thunder
And the stars about his forehead are fourscore.

8

From the deep soul's depths where alway love
abounded
First had risen a song with healing on its wings
Whence the dews of mercy raining balms unbounded
Shed their last compassion even on sceptred things¹
Even on heads that like a curse the crown surrounded
Fell his crowning pity, soft as cleansing springs,
And the sweet last note his wrath relenting sounded
Bade men's hearts be melted not for slaves but
kings.

9

Next, that faith might strengthen fear and love
embolden,
On the creeds of priests a scourge of sunbeams
fell
And its flash made bare the deeps of heaven, beholden
Not of men that cry, Lord, Lord, from church or
cell²

¹ *La Fatale Suprême*. 1879² *Religions et Religion*. 1880.

Hope as young as dawn from night obscure and olden
Rose again, such power abides in truth's one spell :
Night, if dawn it be that touches her, grows golden ;
Tears, if such as angels weep, extinguish hell.

10.

Through the blind loud mills of barren blear-eyed
learning
Where in dust and darkness children's foreheads
bow,
While men's labour, vain as wind or water turning
Wheels and sails of dreams, makes life a leafless
bough,
Fell the light of scorn and pity touched with yearning,
Next, from words that shone as heaven's own kind-
ling brow.¹
Stars were these as watch-fires on the world's waste
burning,
Stars that fade not in the fourfold sunrise now.²

11.

Now the voice that faints not till all wrongs be wroken
Sounds as might the sun's song from the morning's
breast,
All the seals of silence sealed of night are broken,
All the winds that bear the fourfold word are blest.

¹ *L'Ane.* 1880.

² *Les Quatre Vents de l'Esprit.* I. *Le Livre satirique.*
II. *Le Livre dramatique.* III. *Le Livre lyrique.* IV. *Le*
Livre épique. 1881.

All the keen fierce east flames forth one fiery token ,
 All the north is loud with life that knows not rest,
 All the south with song as though the stars had
 spoken ,
 All the judgment fire of sunset scathes the west.

12

Song of pæan, roll of chanted panegyric,
 Though by Pindar's mouth song's trumpet spake
 forth praise,
 March of warrior songs in Pythian mood or Pynthic,
 Though the blast were blown by lips of ancient
 days,
 Ring not clearer than the claron of satiric
 Song whose breath sweeps bare the plague infected
 ways
 Till the world be pure as heaven is for the lyric
 Sun to rise up clothed with radiant sounds as rays.

13.

Clear across the cloud rack fluctuant and erratic
 As the strong star smiles that lets no mourner
 mourn,
 Hymned alike from lips of Lesbian choirs or Attic
 Once at evening and morning newly born,
 Clear and sure above the changes of dramatic
 Tide and current, soft with love and keen with
 scorn,
 Smiles the strong sweet soul of maidenhood, ecstatic
 And inviolate as the red glad mouth of morn.

14.

Pure and passionate as dawn, whose apparition
Thrills with fire from heaven the wheels of hours
that whirl,
Rose and passed her radiance in serene transition
From his eyes who sought a grain and found a
pearl.
But the food by cunning hope for vain fruition
Lightly stolen away from keeping of a churl
Left the bitterness of death and hope's perdition
On the lip that scorn was wont for shame to curl.¹

15.

Over waves that darken round the wave-worn rover
Rang his clarion higher than winds cried round
the ship,
Rose a pageant of set suns and storms blown over,
Hands that held life's guerdons fast or let them
slip.
But no tongue may tell, no thanksgiving discover,
Half the heaven of blessing, soft with clouds that
drip,
Keen with beams that kindle, dear as love to lover,
Opening by the spell's strength on his lyric lip.

¹ *Les Deux Trouvailles de Gallus*. I. *Margarita*, comédie.
II, *Esca*, drame.

16

By that spell the soul transfigured and dilated
 Puts forth wings that widen, breathes a brightening
 air,
 Feeds on light and drinks of music, whence elated
 All her sense grows godlike, seeing all depths
 made bare,
 All the mists wherein before she sat belated
 Shrink, till now the sunlight knows not if they
 were ,
 All this earth transformed is Eden recreated,
 With the breath of heaven remurmuring in her
 hair.

17

Sweeter far than aught of sweet that April nurses
 Deep in dew-dropt woodland folded fast and furled
 Breathes the fragrant song whose burning dawn
 disperses
 Darkness, like the surge of armies backward hurled,
 Even as though the touch of spring's own hand, that
 pierces
 Earth with life's delight, had hidden in the
 unpearled
 Golden bells and buds and petals of his verses
 All the breath of all the flowers in all the world.

18.

But the soul therein, the light that our souls follow,
Fires and fills the song with more of prophet's
pride,
More of life than all the gulfs of death may swallow,
More of flame than all the might of night may hide.
Though the whole dark age were loud and void and
hollow,
Strength of trust were here, and help for all souls
tried,
And a token from the flight of that strange swallow ¹
Whose migration still is toward the wintry side.

19.

Never came such token for divine solution
From the oraculous live darkness whence of yore
Ancient faith sought word of help and retribution,
Truth to lighten doubt, a sign to go before.
Never so baptismal waters of ablution
Bathed the brows of exile on so stern a shore,
Where the lightnings of the sea of revolution
Flashed across them ere its thunders yet might
roar.

¹ Je suis une hirondelle étrange, car j'émigre
Du côté de l'hiver.

20

By the lightning's light of present revelation
 Shown, with epic thunder as from skies that frown,
 Clothed in darkness as of darkling expiation,
 Rose a vision of dead stars and suns gone down,
 Whence of old fierce fire devoured the star struck
 nation,
 Till its wrath and woe lit red the raging town,
 Now made glorious with his statue's crowning station,
 Where may never gleam again a viler crown

21

King, with time for throne and all the years for pages,
 He shall reign though all thrones else be over-
 hurled,
 Served of souls that have his living words for wages,
 Crowned of heaven each dawn that leaves his brows
 impearled,
 Girt about with robes urent of storm that pages,
 Robes not wrought with hands, from no loom's
 web unfurled,
 All the praise of all earth's tongues in all earth's ages,
 All the love of all men's hearts in all the world.

22

Yet what hand shall carve the soul or cast the spurt,
 Mould the face of fame, bid glory's feature glow?
 Who bequeath for eys of ages hence to inherit
 Him, the Master, whom love knows not if it know?

Scarcely perfect praise of men man's work might
merit,

Scarcely bid such aim to perfect stature grow,
Were his hand the hand of *Phidias* who shall rear it,
And his soul the very soul of *Angelo*.

23.

Michael, awful angel of the world's last session,
Once on earth, like him, with fire of suffering tried,
Thine it were, if man's it were, without transgression,
Thine alone, to take this toil upon thy pride.
Thine, whose heart was great against the world's
oppression,
Even as his whose word is lamp and staff and
guide :
Advocate for man, untired of intercession,
Pleads his voice for slaves whose lords his voice
defied.

24.

Earth, with all the kings and thralls on earth, below it,
Heaven alone, with all the worlds in heaven, above,
Let his likeness rise for suns and stars to know it,
High for men to worship, plain for men to love :
Brow that braved the tides which fain would overflow
it,
Lip that gave the challenge, hand that flung the
glove ;
Comforter and prophet, Paraclete and poet,
Soul whose emblems are an eagle and a dove.

25.

Sun, that hast not seen a loftier head wax hoary,
Earth, which hast not shown the sun a nobler birth,
Time, that hast not on thy scroll defiled and gory
One man's name writ brighter in its whole wide
girth,
Witness, till the final years fulfil their story,
Till the stars break off the music of their mirth,
What among the sons of men was this man's glory,
What the vesture of his soul revealed on earth.

SONNETS

HOPE AND FEAR.

BENEATH the shadow of dawn's aerial cope,
With eyes enkindled as the sun's own sphere,
Hope from the front of youth in godlike cheer
Looks Godward, past the shades where blind men grope
Round the dark door that prayers nor dreams can ope,
And makes for joy the very darkness dear
That gives her wide wings play ; nor dreams that fear
At noon may rise and pierce the heart of hope.
Then, when the soul leaves off to dream and yearn,
May truth first purge her eyesight to discern
What once being known leaves time no power to appal ;
Till youth at last, ere yet youth be not, learn
The kind wise word that falls from years that fall—
'Hope thou not much, and fear thou not at all.'

AFTER SUNSET

'Si quis plorum Manibus locus.'

L

STRAIGHT from the sun's grave in the deep clear west
A sweet strong wind blows, glad of life and I,
Under the soft keen stardawn whence the sky
Takes life renewed, and all night's godlike breast
Palpitates, gradually revealed at rest

By growth and change of ardours felt on high,
Make onward, till the last flame fall and die
And all the world by night's broad hand lie blest.
Haply, meseems, as from that edge of death,
Whereon the day lies dark, a brightening breath
Blows more of benediction than the morn,
So from the graves whereon grief gazing saith
That half our heart of life there lies forlorn
May light or breath at least of hope be born.

II.

The wind was soft before the sunset fled :
 Now, while the cloud-enshrouded corpse of day
 Is lowered along a *red funereal* way
 Down to the dark that knows not white from red,
 A clear sheer breeze against the night makes head,
 Serene, but sure of life as ere a ray
 Springs, or the dusk of dawn knows red from grey.
 Being as a soul that knows not quick from dead.
 From far beyond the sunset, far above,
 Full toward the starry soundless east it blows
 Bright as a child's breath breathing on a rose,
 Smooth to the sense as plume of any dove ;
 Till more and more 'as darkness grows and glows
 Silence and night seem likest life and love.

III.

If light of life outlive the set of sun

That men call death and end of all things, then

How should not that which life held best for men
And proved most precious, though it seem undone
By force of death and woful victory won,

Be first and surest of revival, when

Death shall bow down to life arisen again?

So shall the soul seen be the self same one

That looked and spake with even such lips and eyes
As love shall doubt not then to recognise,

And all bright thoughts and smiles of all time past
Revive, transfigured, but in spirit and sense
None other than we knew, for evidence

That love's last mortal word was not his last.

A STUDY FROM MEMORY.

If that be yet a living soul which here
 Seemed brighter for the growth of numbered springs
 And clothed by Time and Pain with goodlier things
 Each year it saw fulfilled a fresh fleet year,
 Death can have changed not aught that made it dear ;
 Half humorous goodness, grave-eyed mirth on wings
 Bright-balanced, blither-voiced than quiring strings ;
 Most radiant patience, crowned with conquering cheer ;
 A spirit inviolable that smiled and sang
 By might of nature and heroic need
 More sweet and strong than loftiest dream or deed ;
 A song that shone, a light whence music rang
 High as the sunniest heights of kindest thought ;
 All these must be, or all she was be nought.

TO DR JOHN BROWN

BEYOND the north wind lay the land of old
 Where men dwelt blithe and blameless, clothed and fed
 With joy's bright raiment and with love's sweet bread,
 The whitest flock of earth's maternal fold.
 None there might wear about his brows enrolled
 A light of lovelier fame than rings your head,
 Whose lovesome love of children and the dead
 All men give thanks for I far off behold
 A dear dead hand that links us, and a light
 The blithest and benignest of the night,
 The night of death's sweet sleep, wherein may be
 A star to show your spirit in present sight
 Some happier island in the Elysian sea
 Where Rab may lick the hand of Marjorie.

March 1882.

TO WILLIAM BELL SCOTT.

THE larks are loud above our leagues of whin
 Now the sun's perfume fills their glorious gold
 With odour like the colour : all the wold
 Is only light and song and wind wherein
These twain are blent in one with shining din.
 And now your gift, a giver's kingly-souled,
 Dear old fast friend whose honours grow not old,
 Bids memory's note as loud and sweet begin.
 Though all but we from life be now gone forth
 Of that bright household in our joyous north
 Where I, scarce clear of boyhood just at end,
 First met your hand ; yet under life's clear dome,
 Now seventy strenuous years have crowned my friend,
 Shines no less bright his full-sheaved harvest-home.

April 20, 1882.

A DEATH ON EASTER DAY.

THE strong spring sun rejoicingly may rise,
 Rise and make revel, as of old men said,
 Like dancing hearts of lovers newly wed
 A light more bright than ever bathed the skies
 Departs for all time out of all men's eyes.

The crowns that girt last night a living head
 Shine only now, though deathless, on the dead
 Art that mocks death, and Song that never dies.
 Albeit the bright sweet mothlike wings be furled,
 Hope seer, past all division and defection,
 And higher than swims the mist of human breath,
 The soul most radiant once in all the world
 Requicken'd to regenerate resurrection
 Out of the likeness of the shadow of death.

April 1832.

*ON THE DEATHS OF THOMAS CARLYLE
AND GEORGE ELIOT.*

Two souls diverse out of our human sight
 Pass, followed one with love and each with wonder :
 The stormy sophist with his mouth of thunder,
 Clothed with loud words and mantled in the might
 Of darkness and magnificence of night ;
 And one whose eye could smite the night in sunder,
 Searching if light or no light were thereunder,
 And found in love of loving-kindness light.
 Duty divine and Thought with eyes of fire
 Still following Righteousness with deep desire
 Shone sole and stern before her and above,
 Sure stars and sole to steer by ; but more sweet
 Shone lower the loveliest lamp for earthly feet,
 The light of little children, and their love.

*AFTER LOOKING INTO CARLYLE'S
REMINISCENCES*

I


THREE men lived yet when this dead man was young
 Whose names and words endure for ever one
 Whose eyes grew dim with straining toward the sun,
 And his wings weakened and his angel's tongue
 Lost half the sweetest song was ever sung,
 But like the strain half uttered earth hears none,
 Nor shall man hear till all men's songs are done
 One whose clear spirit like an eagle hung
 Between the mountains hallowed by his love
 And the sky stainless as his soul above
 And one the sweetest heart that ever spake
 The brightest words wherein sweet wisdom smiled.
 These deathless names by this dead snake defiled
 Bid memory spit upon him for their sake.

II.

Sweet heart, forgive me for thine own sweet sake,
Whose kind blithe soul such seas of sorrow swam,
And for my love's sake, powerless as I am
For love to praise thee, or like thee to make
Music of mirth where hearts less pure would break,
Less pure than thine, our life-unspotted Lamb.
Things hatefulest thou hadst not heart to damn,
Nor wouldst have set thine heel on this dead snake.
Let worms consume its memory with its tongue,
The fang that stabbed fair Truth, the lip that stung
Men's memories uncorroded with its breath.
Forgive me, that with bitter words like his
I mix the gentlest English name that is,
The tenderest held of all that know not death.

II.

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Whose kind blithe soul such seas of sorrow swam,
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A LAST LOOK.

Sick of self love, Malvolio, like an owl

That boots the sun risen where starlight sank,

With Garter garters crossed athwart thy frank

Stout Scottish legs men watched thee snarl and scowl,

And boys responsive with reverberate howl

Shrilled, hearing how to thee the springtime stank

And as thine own soul all the world smelt rank

And as thine own thoughts Liberty seemed foul

Now, for all ill thoughts nursed and ill words given

Not all condemned, not utterly forgiven,

Son of the storm and darkness, pass in peace

Peace upon earth thou knewest not now, being dead,

Rest, with nor curse nor blessing on thine head

Where high strung hate and strenuous envy cease.

DICKENS.

CHIEF in thy generation born of men
 Whom English praise acclaimed as English-born,
 With eyes that matched the worldwide eyes of morn
 For gleam of tears or laughter, tenderest then
 When thoughts of children warmed their light, or when
 Reverence of age with love and labour worn,
 Or godlike pity fired with godlike scorn,
 Shot through them flame that winged thy swift live pen :
 Where stars and suns that we behold not burn,
 Higher even than here, though highest was here thy place,
 Love sees thy spirit laugh and speak and shine
 With Shakespeare and the soft bright soul of Sterne
 And Fielding's kindest might and Goldsmith's grace ;
 Scarce one more loved or worthier love than thine.

*ON LAMB'S SPECIMENS OF DRAMATIC
POETS.*

I

If all the flowers of all the fields on earth
 By wonder working summer were made one,
 Its fragrance were not sweeter in the sun,
 Its treasure house of leaves were not more worth
 Than those wherefrom thy light of musing mirth
 Shone, till each leaf whereon thy pen would run
 Breathed life, and all its breath was benison.
 Beloved beyond all names of English birth,
 More dear than mightier memories, gentlest name
 That ever clothed itself with flower sweet fame,
 Or linked itself with lofliest names of old
 By right and might of loving, I, that am
 Less than the least of those within thy fold,
 Give only thanks for them to thee, Charles Lamb.

II.

So many a year had borne its own bright bees
 And slain them since thy honey-bees were hived,
 John Day, in cells of flower-sweet verse contrived
 So well with craft of moulding melodies,
 Thy soul perchance in amaranth fields at ease
 Thought not to hear the sound on earth revived
 Of summer music from the spring derived
 When thy song sucked the flower of flowering trees
 But thine was not the chance of every day :
 Time, after many a darkling hour, grew sunny,
 And light between the clouds ere sunset swam,
 Laughing, and kissed their darkness all away,
 When, touched and tasted and approved, thy honey
 Took subtler sweetness from the lips of Lamb.

TO JOHN NICHOL

I

FRIEND of the dead, and friend of all my days
 Even since they cast off boyhood, I salute
 The song saluting friends whose songs are mute
 With full burnt offerings of clear-spirited praise
 That since our old young years our several ways
 Have led through fields diverse of flower and fruit
 Yet no cross wind has once relaxed the root
 We set long since beneath the sundawn's rays,
 The root of trust whence towered the trusty tree,
 Friendship—thus only and duly might impel
 My song to salutation of your own,
 More even than praise of one unseen of me
 And loved—the starry spirit of Dobell,
 To mine by light and music only known

II.

But more than this what moves me most of all
To leave not all unworded and unsped
The whole heart's greeting of my thanks unsaid
Scarce needs this sign, that from my tongue should fall
His name whom sorrow and reverent love recall,
The sign to friends on earth of that dear head
Alive, which now long since untimely dead
The wan grey waters covered for a pall.
Their trustless reaches dense with tangling stems
Took never life more taintless of rebuke,
More pure and perfect, more serene and kind,
Than when those clear eyes closed beneath the Thames,
And made the now more hallowed name of Luke
Memorial to us of morning left behind.

May 1881.

DYSTHANATOS.

*Ad generem Cæteris sine cæde et vulnere pauci
Descendunt reges, aut suæ morte tyranni.*

By no dry death another king goes down
 The way of kings. Yet may no free man's voice,
 For stern compassion and deep awe, rejoice
 That one sign more is given against the crown,
 That one more head those dark red waters drown
 Which rise round thrones whose trembling equipoise
 Is propped on sand and bloodshed and such toys
 As human hearts that shrink at human frown.
 The name went red on Polish earth, the star
 That was to outshine our England's in the far
 East heaven of empire—where is one that saith
 Proud words now, prophesying of this White Czar?
 'In bloodless pangs few kings yield up their breath,
 Few tyrants perish by no violent death.'

March 14, 1881

EUONYMOS.

εὖ μὲν ἢ τιμὴν ἐδίδου νικηφόρος ἀλκή
ἐκ νίκης ὄνομα' ἔσχε φόβου κέαρ αἰὲν ἄθικτος.

A YEAR ago red wrath and keen despair
Spake, and the sole word from their darkness sent
Laid low the lord not all omnipotent
Who stood most like a god of all that were
As gods for pride of power, till fire and air
Made earth of all his godhead. Lightning rent
The heart of empire's lurid firmament,
And laid the mortal core of manhood bare.
But when the calm crowned head that all revere
For valour higher than that which casts out fear,
Since fear came near it never, comes near death,
Blind murder cowers before it, knowing that here
No braver soul drew bright and queenly breath
Since England wept upon Elizabeth.

March 8, 1882.

*ON THE RUSSIAN PERSECUTION OF
THE JEWS*

O SON of man, by lying tongues adored,
 By slaughterous hands of slaves with feet red shod
 In carnage deep as ever Christian trod
 Profaned with prayer and sacrifice abhorred
 And incense from the trembling tyrant's horde,
 Brute worshippers or wielders of the rod,
 Most murderous even of all that call thee God,
 Most treacherous even that ever called thee Lord,
 Face loved of little children long ago,
 Head hated of the priests and rulers then,
 If thou see this, or hear these hounds of thine
 Run ravening as the Gadarean swine,
 Say, was not this thy Passion, to foreknow
 In death's worst hour the works of Christian men?

Jan 23, 1882

BISMARCK AT CANOSSA.

Not all disgraced, in that Italian town,
The imperial German covered beneath thine hand,
Alone indeed imperial Hildebrand,
And felt thy foot and Rome's, and felt her frown
And thine, more strong and sovereign than his crown,
Though iron forged its blood-encrusted band.
But now the princely wielder of his land,
For hatred's sake toward freedom, so bows down,
No strength is in the foot to spurn : its tread
Can bruise not now the proud submitted head :
But how much more abased, much lower brought low,
And more intolerably humiliated,
The neck submissive of the prosperous foe,
Than his whom scorn saw shuddering in the snow !

December 31, 1881.

QUIA NOMINOR LEO

L

WHAT part is left thee, lion? Ravenous beast,
 Which hadst the world for pasture, and for scope
 And compass of thine homicidal hope
 The kingdom of the spirit of man, the feast
 Of souls subdued from west to sunless east,
 From blackening north to bloodred south aslope,
 All servile, earth for footcloth of the pope,
 And heaven for chancel ceiling of the priest,
 Thou that hadst earth by right of rack and rod,
 Thou that hadst Rome because thy name was God,
 And by thy creed's gift heaven wherein to dwell,
 Heaven laughs with all his light and might above
 That earth has cast thee out of faith and love,
 Thy part is but the hollow dream of hell.

IL

The light of life has faded from thy cause,
 High priest of heaven and hell and purgatory :
 Thy lips are loud with strains of oldworld story,
 But the red prey was rent out of thy paws
 Long since : and they that dying brake down thy laws
 Have with the fires of death-enkindled glory
 Put out the flame that faltered on thy hoary
 High altars, waning with the world's applause.
 This Italy was Dante's : Bruno died
 Here : Campanella, too sublime for pride,
 Endured thy God's worst here, and hence went home.
 And what art thou, that time's full tide should shrink
 For thy sake downward? What art thou, to think
 Thy God shall give thee back for birthright Rome?

January, 1882.

THE CHANNEL TUNNEL

Not for less love, all glorious France, to thee,
 'Sweet enemy' called in days long since at end
 Now found and hailed of England sweeter friend,
 Bright sister of our freedom now, being free,
 Not for less love or faith in friendship we
 Whose love burnt ever toward thee reprehend
 The vile vain greed whose pursy dreams portend
 Between our shores suppression of the sea.
 Not by dull toil of blind mechanic art
 Shall these be linked for no man's force to part
 Nor length of years and changes to divide,
 But union only of trust and loving heart
 And perfect faith in freedom strong to abide
 And spint at one with spint on either side.

April 3, 1882.

SIR WILLIAM GOMM.

I.

AT threescore years and five aroused anew
 To rule in India, forth a soldier went
 On whose bright-fronted youth fierce war had spent
 Its iron stress of storm, till glory grew
 Full as the red sun waned on Waterloo.

Landing, he met the word from England sent
 Which bade him yield up rule : and he, content,
 Resigned it, as a mightier warrior's due ;
 And wrote as one rejoicing to record
 That 'from the first' his royal heart was lord
 Of its own pride or pain ; that thought was none
 Therein save this, that in her perilous strait
 England, whose womb brings forth her sons so great,
 Should choose to serve her first her mightiest son.

II

Glory beyond all flight of warlike fame
 Go with the warrior's memory who preferred
 To praise of men whereby men's hearts are stirred,
 And acclamation of his own proud name
 With blare of trumpet blasts and sound and flame
 Of pageant honour, and the titular word
 That only wins men worship of the herd,
 His country's sovereign good, who overcame
 Pride, wrath, and hope of all high chance on earth,
 For this land's love that gave his great heart birth.
 O nursling of the sea winds and the sea,
 Immortal England, goddess ocean born,
 What shall thy children fear, what strengths not scorn,
 While children of such mould are born to thee?

EUTHANATOS.

IN MEMORY OF MRS THELLUSSON.

FORTH of our ways and woes,
 Forth of the winds and snows,
 A white soul soaring goes,
 Winged like a dove :
 So sweet, so pure, so clear,
 So heavenly tempered here,
 Love need not hope or fear her changed above :

Ere dawned her day to die,
 So heavenly, that on high
 Change could not glorify
 Nor death refine her :
 Pure gold of perfect love,
 On earth like heaven's own dove,
 She cannot wear, above, a smile diviner.

Her voice in heaven's own quire
 Can sound no heavenlier lyre
 Than here : no purer fire
 Her soul can soar :
 No sweeter stars her eyes
 In unimagined skies
 Beyond our sight can rise than here before.

Hardly long years had shed
 Their shadows on her head.
 Hardly we think her dead,
 Who hardly thought her
 Old hardly can believe
 The grief our hearts receive
 And wonder while they grieve, as wrong were wrought
 her

But though strong grief be strong
 No word or thought of wrong
 May stain the trembling song,
 Wring the bruised heart,
 That sounds or sighs its faint
 Low note of love nor taint
 Grief for so sweet a saint, when such depart.

A saint whose perfect soul,
 With perfect love for goal,
 Faith hardly might controul
 Creeds might not harden :
 A flower more splendid far
 Than the most radiant star
 Seen here of all that are in God's own garden.

Surely the stars we see
 Rise and relapse as we,
 And change and set, may be
 But shadows too
 But spurts that man's lot
 Could neither mar nor spot
 Like these false lights are not, being heavenly true.

Not like these dying lights
Of worlds whose glory smites
The passage of the nights
Through heaven's blind prison :
Not like their souls who see,
If thought fly far and free,
No heavenlier heaven to be for souls rerisen.

A soul wherein love shone
Even like the sun, alone,
With fervour of its own
And splendour fed,
Made by no creeds less kind
Toward souls by none confined,
Could Death's self quench or blind, Love's self were
dead.

February 4, 1881.

FIRST AND LAST.

UPOV the borderlands of being,
Where life draws hardly breath
Between the lights and shadows fleeing
Fast as a word one saith,
Two flowers rejoice our eyesight, seeing
The dawns of birth and death.

Behind the babe his dawn is lying
Half risen with notes of mirth
From all the winds about it flying
Through new-born heaven and earth
Before bright age his day for dying
Dawns equal-eyed with birth

Equal the dews of even and dawn,
Equal the sun's eye seen
A hand's breadth risen and half withdrawn
But no bright hour between
Brings aught so bright by stream or lawn
To noonday growths of green.

Which flower of life may smell the sweeter
 To love's insensual sense,
Which fragrance move with offering meeter
 His soothed omnipotence,
Being chosen as fairer or as fleeter,
 Borne hither or borne hence,

Love's foiled omniscience knows not : this
 Were more than all he knows
With all his lore of bale and bliss, /
 The choice of rose and rose,
One red as lips that touch with his,
 One white as moonlit snows.

No hope is half so sweet and good,
 No dream of saint or sage
So fair as these are : no dark mood
 But these might best assuage ;
The sweet red rose of babyhood,
 The white sweet rose of age.

*LINES ON THE DEATH OF
EDWARD JOHN TRELAWNY*

Last high star of the years whose thunder
Still men's listening remembrance hears,
Last light left of our fathers' years,
Watched with honour and hailed with wonder
Thee too then have the years borne under,
Thou too then hast regained thy peers.

Wings that warred with the winds of morning,
Storm winds rocking the red great dawn,
Close at last, and a film is drawn
Over the eyes of the storm bird, scorning
Now no longer the loud wind's warning,
Waves that threaten or waves that fawn.

Peers were none of thee left us living,
Peers of theirs we shall see no more.
Eight years over the full fourscore
Knew thee now shalt thou sleep, forgiving
All griefs past of the wild world's giving,
Moored at last on the stormless shore.

Worldwide liberty's lifelong lover,
Lover no less of the strength of song,
Sea-king, swordsman, hater of wrong,
Over thy dust that the dust shall cover
Comes my song as a bird to hover,
Borne of its will as of wings along.

Cherished of thee were this brief song's brothers
Now that follows them, cherishing thee.
Over the tides and the tideless sea
Soft as a smile of the earth our mother's
Flies it faster than all those others,
First of the troop at thy tomb to be.

Memories of Greece and the mountain's hollow
Guarded alone of thy loyal sword
Hold thy name for our hearts in ward :
Yet more fain are our hearts to follow
One way now with the southward swallow
Back to the grave of the man their lord.

Heart of hearts, art thou moved not, hearing
Surely, if hearts of the dead may hear,
Whose true heart it is now draws near?
Surely the sense of it thrills thee, cheering
Darkness and death with the news now nearing—
Shelley, Trelawny rejoins thee here.

ADIEUX À MARIE STUART

I.

QUEEN, for whose house my fathers fought,
 With hopes that rose and fell,
 Red star of boyhood's fiery thought,
 Farewell.

They gave their lives, and I, my queen,
 Have given you of my life,
 Seeing your brave star burn high between
 Men's strife.

The strife that lightened round their spears
 Long since fell still — so long
 Hardly may hope to last in years
 My song

But still through strife of time and thought
 Your light on me too fell
 Queen, in whose name we sang or fought,
 Farewell.

II.

There beats no heart on either border
 Wherethrough the north blasts blow
But keeps your memory as a warder
 His beacon-fire aglow.

Long since it fired with love and wonder
 Mine, for whose April age
Blithe midsummer made banquet under
 The shade of Hermitage.

Soft sang the burn's blithe notes, that gather
 Strength to ring true :
And air and trees and sun and heather
 Remembered you.

Old border ghosts of fight or fairy
 Or love or teen,
These they forgot, remembering Mary
 The Queen.

III.

Queen once of Scots and ever of ours
 Whose sires brought forth for you
Their lives to strew your way like flowers,
 Adieu.

Dead is full many a dead man's name
 Who died for you this long
Time past : shall this too fare the same,
 My song ?

But surely, though it die or live,
Your face was worth
All that a man may think to give
On earth.

No darkness cast of years between
Can darken you
Man's love will never bid my queen
Adieu.

IV

Love hangs like light about your name
As music round the shell
No heart can take of you a tane
Farewell.

Yet, when your very face was seen,
Ill gifts were yours for giving
Love gat strange guerdons of my queen
When living.

O diamond heart unflawed and clear,
The whole world's crowning jewel !
Was ever heart so deadly dear
So cruel ?

Yet none for you of all that bled
Grudged once one drop that fell
Not one to life reluctant said
Farewell.

V.

Strange love they have given you, love disloyal,
Who mock with praise your name,
To leave a head so rare and royal
Too low for praise or blame.

You could not love nor hate, they tell us,
You had nor sense nor sting :
In God's name, then, what plague befell us
To fight for such a thing?

'Some faults the gods will give,' to fetter
Man's highest intent :
But surely you were something better
Than innocent !

No maid that strays with steps unwary
Through snares unseen,
But one to live and die for ; Mary,
The Queen.

VI.

Forgive them all their praise, who blot
Your fame with praise of you :
Then love may say, and falter not
Adieu.

Yet some you hardly would forgive
 Who did you much less wrong
 Once but resentment should not live
 Too long.

They never saw your hp's bnght bow,
 Your swordbright eyes,
 The bluest of heavenly things below
 The skies.

Clear eyes that love's self finds most like
 A swordblade's blue,
 A swordblade's ever keen to strike,
 Adieu.

vii

Though all things breathe or sound of fight
 That yet make up your spell,
 To bid you were to bid the light
 Farewell

Farewell the song says only, being
 A star whose rare is run
 Farewell the soul says never, seeing
 The sun.

Yet, wellnigh as with flash of tears,
 The song must say, but so
 That took your praise /up twenty years
 Ago.

More bright than stars or moons that vary,
Sun kindling heaven and hell,
Here, after all these years, Queen Mary,
Farewell.

HERSE

WHEN grace is given us ever to behold
 A child some sweet months old,
 Love, laying across our lips his finger, saith,
 Smiling, with bated breath,
 Hush ! for the holiest thing that lives is here,
 And heaven's own heart how near !
 How dare we, that may gaze not on the sun,
 Gaze on this vainer one ?
 Heart, hold thy peace, eyes, be cast down for shame,
 Lips, breathe not yet its name.
 In heaven they know what name to call it, we,
 How should we know ? For, see !
 The adorable sweet living marvellous
 Strange light that lightens us
 Who gaze, desertless of such glorious grace,
 Full in a babe's warm face !
 All roses that the morning tears are nought,
 All stars not worth a thought,
 Set this one star against them, or suppose
 As rival this one rose
 What price could pay with earth's whole weight of gold
 One least flushed roseleaf's fold

Of all this dimpling store of smiles that shine
 From each warm curve and line,
Each charm of flower-sweet flesh, to reillumine
 The dappled rose-red bloom
Of all its dainty body, honey-sweet
 Clenched hands and curled-up feet,
That on the roses of the dawn have trod
 As they came down from God,
And keep the flush and colour that the sky
 Takes when the sun comes nigh,
And keep the likeness of the smile their grace
 Evoked on God's own face
When, seeing this work of his most heavenly mood,
 He saw that it was good?
For all its warm sweet body seems one smile,
 And mere men's love too vile
To meet it, or with eyes that worship dims
 Read o'er the little limbs,
Read all the book of all their beauties o'er,
 Rejoice, revere, adore,
Bow down and worship each delight in turn,
 Laugh, wonder, yield, and yearn.
But when our trembling kisses dare, yet dread,
 Even to draw nigh its head,
And touch, and scarce with touch or breath surprise
 Its mild miraculous eyes
Out of their viewless vision—O, what then,
 What may be said of men?
What speech may name a new-born child? what word
 Earth ever spake or heard?

The best men's tongue that ever glory knew
 Called that a drop of dew
Which from the breathing creature's kindly womb
 Came forth in blameless bloom.
We have no word, as had those men most high,
 To call a baby by
Rose, ruby, lily, pearl of stormless seas—
 A better word than these,
A better sign it was than flower or gem
 That love revealed to them
They knew that whence comes light or quickening
 flame,
 Thence only this thing came,
And only might be likened of our love
 To somewhat born above,
Not even to sweetest things dropped else on earth,
 Only to dew's own birth.
Nor doubt we but their sense was heavenly true,
 Babe, when we gaze on you,
A dew drop out of heaven whose colours are
 More bright than sun or star,
As now, ere watching love dare fear or hope,
 Lips, hands, and eyelids ope,
And all your life is mixed with earthly heaven.
 O child, what news from heaven?

TWINS.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO W. M. R. AND L. R.

APRIL, on whose wings
 Ride all gracious things,
 Like the star that brings
 All things good to man,
 Ere his light, that yet
 Makes the month shine, set,
 And fair May forget
 Whence her birth began,

Brings, as heart would choose,
 Sound of golden news,
 Bright as kindling dews
 When the dawn begins ;
 Tidings clear as mirth,
 Sweet as air and earth
 Now that hail the birth,
 Twice thus blest, of twins.

In the lovely land
 Where with hand in hand
 Lovers wedded stand
 Other joys before

TWINs

Made your mixed life sweet
Now, as Time sees meet,
Three glad blossoms greet
Two glad blossoms more.

Fed with sun and dew,
While your joys were new,
First arose and grew
One bright olive shoot
Then a fair and fine
Ship of warm haired pine
Felt the sweet sun shine
On its leaf and fruit.

And it wore for mark
Graven on the dark
Beauty of its bark
That the noblest name
Worn in song of old
By the king whose bold
Hand had fast in hold
All the flower of fame.

Then, with southern skirts
Flattered in her eyes,
Which, in lovelier wise
Yet, reflect their blue
Brightened more, being bright
Here with life's delight,
And with love's live light
Glorified anew,

Came, as fair as came
One who bore her name
(She that broke as flame
From the swan-shell white),
Crowned with tender hair
Only, but more fair
Than all queens that were
Themes of oldworld fight,

Of your flowers the third
Bud, or new-fledged bird
In your hearts' nest heard
Murmuring like a dove
Bright as those that drew
Over waves where blew
No loud wind the blue
Heaven-hued car of love.

Not the glorious grace
Even of that one face
Potent to displace
All the towers of Troy
Surely shone more clear
Once with childlike cheer
Than this child's face here
Now with living joy.

After these again
Here in April's train
Breaks the bloom of twain
Blossoms in one birth

For a crown of May
On the front of day
When he takes his way
Over heaven and earth

Half a heavenly thing
Given from heaven to Spring
By the sun her king,
Half a tender toy,
Seems a child of curl
Yet too soft to twirl,
Seems the flower sweet girl
By the flower bright boy

All the kind gods' grace,
All their love, embrace
Ever either face,
Ever brood above them
All soft wings of hours
Screen them as with flowers
From all beams and showers.
All life's seasons love them.

When the dews of sleep
Falling lightliest keep
Eyes too close to peep
Forth and laugh off rest,
Joy from face to feet
Fill them, as is meet
Life to them be sweet
As their mother's breast

When those dewes are dry,
 And in day's bright eye
 Looking full they lie
 Bright as rose and pearl,
 All returns of joy
 Pure of time's alloy
 Bless the rose-red boy,
 Guard the rose-white girl.

POSTSCRIPT.

Friends, if I could take
 Half a note from Blake
 Or but one verse make
 Of the Conqueror's mine,
 Better than my best
 Song above your nest
 I would sing : the quest
 Now seems too divine.

April 28, 1881.

THE SALT OF THE EARTH

If childhood were not in the world,
 But only men and women grown ,
 No baby locks in tendrils curled,
 No baby blossoms blown ,

Though men were stronger, women fairer,
 And nearer all delights in reach,
 And verse and music uttered rarer
 Tones of more godlike speech ,

Though the utmost life of life's best hours
 Found, as it cannot now find, words ,
 Though desert sands were sweet as flowers
 And flowers could sing like birds,

But children never heard them, never
 They felt a child's foot leap and run
 This were a drearier star than ever
 Yet looked upon the sun.

SEVEN YEARS OLD.

I.

SEVEN white roses on one tree,
 Seven white loaves of blameless leaven,
 Seven white sails on one soft sea,
 Seven white swans on one lake's lee,
 Seven white flowerlike stars in heaven,
 All are types unmeet to be
 For a birthday's crown of seven.

II.

Not the radiance of the roses,
 Not the blessing of the bread,
 Not the breeze that ere day grows is
 Fresh for sails and swans, and closes
 Wings above the sun's grave spread,
 When the starshine on the snows is
 Sweet as sleep on sorrow shed,

III.

Nothing sweetest, nothing best,
 Holds so good and sweet a treasure

As the love wherewith once blest
 Joy grows holy, grief takes rest,
 Life, half tired with hours to measure,
 Fills his eyes and lips and breast
 With most light and breath of pleasure ,

IV

As the rapture unpolluted,
 As the passion undefiled,
 By whose force all pains heart rooted
 Are transfigured and transmuted,
 Recompensed and reconciled,
 Through the imperial, undisputed,
 Present godhead of a child.

V

Brown bright eyes and fair bright head,
 Worth a worthier crown than this is,
 Worth a worthier song instead,
 Sweet grave wise round mouth, full fed
 With the joy of love, whose bliss is
 More than mortal wine and bread,
 Lips whose words are sweet as kisses,

VI

Little hands so glad of giving,
 Little heart so glad of love,
 Little soul so glad of living,

While the strong swift hours are weaving
 Light with darkness woven above,
Time for mirth and time for grieving,
 Plume of raven and plume of dove,

VII.

I can give you but a word
 Warm with love therein for leaven,
But a song that falls unheard
Yet on ears of sense unstirred
 Yet by song so far from heaven,
Whence you came the brightest bird,
 Seven years since, of seven times seven.

EIGHT YEARS OLD

I

SUN, whom the faltering snow cloud fears,
 Rise, let the time of year be May,
 Speak now the word that April hears,
 Let March have all his royal way ,
 Bid all spring raise in winter's ears
 All tunes her children hear or play,
 Because the crown of eight glad years
 On one bright head is set to-day

II

What matters cloud or sun to-day
 To him who wears the wreath of years
 So many, and all like flowers at play
 With wind and sunshine, while his ears
 Hear only song on every way ?
 More sweet than spring triumphant hears
 Ring through the revel rout of May
 Are these, the notes that winter fears.

III.

Strong-hearted winter knows and fears
The music made of love at play,
Or haply loves the tune he hears
From hearts fulfilled with flowering May,
Whose molten music thaws his ears
Late frozen, deaf but yesterday
To sounds of dying and dawning years,
Now quickened on his deathward way.

IV.

For deathward now lies winter's way
Down the green vestibule of years
That each year brightens day by day
With flower and shower till hope scarce fears
And fear grows wholly hope of May.
But we—the music in our ears
Made of love's pulses as they play
The heart alone that makes it hears.

V.

The heart it is that plays and hears
High salutation of to-day.
Tongue falters, hand shrinks back, song fears
Its own unworthiness to play
Fit music for those eight sweet years,
Or sing their blithe accomplished way.
No song quite worth a young child's ears
Broke ever even from birds in May.

VI

r

There beats not in the heart of May,
When summer hopes and springtide fears,
There falls not from the height of day,
When sunlight speaks and silence hears,
So sweet a psalm as children play
And sing each hour of all their years,
Each moment of their lovely way,
And know not how it thrills our ears

VII

Ah child, what are we, that our ears
Should hear you singing on your way,
Should have this happiness? The years
Whose hurrying wings about us play
Are not like yours, whose flower time fears
Nought worse than sunlit showers in May,
Being sunless as the spring, that hears
Her own heart praise her every day

VIII

Yet we too triumph in the day
That bare, to entrance our eyes and ears,
To lighten daylight, and to play
Such notes as darkness knows and fears,
The child whose face illumines our way,
Whose voice lifts up the heart that hears,
Whose hand is as the hand of May
To bring us flowers from eight full years.

COMPARISONS.

CHILD, when they say that others
 Have been or are like you,
 Babes fit to be your brothers,
 Sweet human drops of dew,
 Bright fruit of mortal mothers,
 What should one say or do?

We know the thought is treason,
 We feel the dream absurd ;
 A claim rebuked of reason,
 That withers at a word :
 For never shone the season
 That bore so blithe a bird.

Some smiles may seem as merry,
 Some glances gleam as wise,
 From lips as like a cherry
 And scarce less gracious eyes ;
 Eyes browner than a berry,
 Lips red as morning's rise.

COMPARISONS.

But never yet rang laughter
 So sweet in gladdened ears
 Through wall and floor and rafter
 As all this household hears
 And rings response thereafter
 Till cloudiest weather clears

When those your chosen of all men,
 Whose honey never dloys,
 Two lights whose smiles enthrall men,
 Were called at your age boys,
 Those mighty men, while small men,
 Could make no merrier noise.

Our Shakespeare, surely, dashed not
 More lightly pain aside
 From radiant lips that quaffed not
 Of forethought's tragic tide
 Our Dickens, doubtless, laughed not
 More loud with life's first pride.

The dawn were not more cheerless
 With neither light nor dew
 Than we without the fearless
 Clear laugh that thrills us through
 If ever child stood peerless,
 Love knows that child is you

²
WHAT IS DEATH?

Looking on a page where stood
 Graven of old on old-world wood
 Death, and by the grave's edge grim,
 Pale, the young man facing him,
 Asked my well-beloved of me
 Once what strange thing this might be,
 Gaunt and great of limb.

Death, I told him : and, surprise
 Deepening more his wildwood eyes
 (Like some sweet fleet thing's whose breath
 Speaks all spring though nought it saith),
 Up he turned his rosebright face
 Glorious with its seven years' grace,
 Asking—What is death?

A CHILD'S PITY.^o

No sweeter thing than children's ways and wiles,
 Surely, we say, can gladden eyes and ears
 Yet sometime sweeter than their words or smiles
 Are even their tears.

To one for once a piteous tale was read,
 How when the murderous mother crocodile
 Was slain, her fierce brood famished, and lay dead,
 Starved, by the Nile.

In vast green reed beds on the vast grey slime
 Those monsters motherless and helpless lay,
 Perishing only for the parent's crime
 Whose seed were they

Hours after, toward the dusk, our blithe small bird
 Of Paradise, who has our hearts in keeping,
 Was heard or seen, but hardly seen or heard,
 For pity weeping

He was so sorry, sitting still apart,
 For the poor little crocodiles, he said
 Six years had given him, for an angel's heart,
 A child's instead.

Feigned tears the false beasts shed for murderous
ends,

We know from travellers' tales of crocodiles :
But these tears wept upon them of my friend's
Outshine his smiles.

What heavenliest angels of what heavenly city
Could match the heavenly heart in children here?
The heart that hallowing all things with its pity
Casts out all fear?

So lovely, so divine, so dear their laughter
Seems to us, we know not what could be more
dear :
But lovelier yet we see the sign thereafter
Of such a tear.

With sense of love half laughing and half weeping
We met your tears, our small sweet-spirited friend :
Let your love have us in its heavenly keeping
To life's last end.

A CHILD'S LAUGHTER.

All the bells of heaven may ring,
 All the birds of heaven may sing,
 All the wells on earth may spring,
 All the winds on earth may bring
 All sweet sounds together,
 Sweeter far than all things heard,
 Hand of harper, tone of bird,
 Sound of woods at sundawn stirred,
 Welling waters winsome word,
 Wind in warm wan weather,

One thing yet there is, that none
 Hearing ere its chime be done
 Knows not well the sweetest one
 Heard of man beneath the sun,
 Hoped in heaven hereafter,
 Soft and strong and loud and light,
 Very sound of very light
 Heard from morning's rosiest height,
 When the soul of all delight
 Fills a child's clear laughter

Golden bells of welcome rolled
Never forth such notes, nor told
Hours so blithe in tones so bold,
As the radiant mouth of gold

Here that rings forth heaven.
If the golden-crested wren
Were a nightingale—why, then,
Something seen and heard of men
Might be half as sweet as when
Laughs a child of seven.

A CHILD'S THANKS.

How low soe'er men rank us,
How high soe'er we win,
The children far above us
Dwell, and they deign to love us,
With lovelier love than ours,
And smiles more sweet than flowers,
As though the sun should thank us
For letting light come in.

With too divine complaisance,
Whose grace misleads them thus,
Being gods, in heavenly blindness
They call our worship kindness,
Our pebble gift a gem
They think us good to them,
Whose glance, whose breath, whose presence,
Are gifts too good for us.

The poet high and hoary
Of meres that mountains bind
Felt his great heart more often
Yearn, and its proud strength soften

From stern to tenderer mood,
At thought of gratitude
Shown than of song or story
He heard of hearts unkind.

But with what words for token
And what adoring tears
Of reverence risen to passion,
In what glad prostrate fashion
Of spirit and soul subdued,
May man show gratitude
For thanks of children spoken
That hover in his ears?

The angels laugh, your brothers,
Child, hearing you thank me,
With eyes whence night grows sunny,
And touch of lips like honey,
And words like honey-dew :
But how shall I thank you ?
For gifts above all others
What guerdon-gift may be ?

What wealth of words caressing,
What choice of songs found best,
Would seem not as derision,
Found vain beside the vision
And glory from above
Shown in a child's heart's love ?
His part in life is blessing ;
Ours, only to be blest.

A CHILD'S BATTLES

ὦς ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς —PINDAR.

PRAISE of the knights of old
May sleep their tale is told,
And no man cares
The praise which fires our lips is
A knight's whose fame eclipses
All of theirs.

The ruddiest light in heaven
Blazed as his birth star seven
Long years ago
All glory crown that old year
Which brought our stout small soldier
With the snow

Each baby born has one
Star, for his friends a sun,
The first of stars
And we, the more we scan it,
The more grow sure your planet,
Child, was Mars.

For each one flower, perchance,
Blooms as his cognizance :

 The snowdrop chill,
The violet un beholden,
For some : for you the golden
 Daffodil.

Erect, a fighting flower,
It breasts the breeziest hour
 That ever blew,
And bent or broke things brittle
Or frail, unlike a little
 Knight like you.

Its flower is firm and fresh
And stout like sturdiest flesh
 Of children : all
The strenuous blast that parches
Spring hurts it not till March is
 Near his fall.

If winds that prate and fret
Remark, rebuke, regret,
 Lament, or blame
The brave plant's martial passion,
It keeps its own free fashion
 All the same.

(
We that would fain seem wise
Assume grave mouths and eyes
 Whose looks reprove

A CHILD'S BATTLES

That tongues of beggars ravish
 From small stout hands so lavish
 Of their store.

Sweet hardy kindly hands
 Like these were his that stands
 With heel on gorge
 Seen trampling down the dragon
 On sign or flask or flagon,
 Sweet Saint George.

Some tournament, perchance,
 Of hands that couch no lance,
 Might mark this spot
 Your lists, if here some pleasant
 Small Guenevere were present,
 Lancelot.

My brave bright flower, you need
 No foolish song, nor heed
 It more than spring
 The sighs of winter stricken
 Dead when your haunts requicken
 Here, my king.

Yet O, how hardly may
 The wheels of singing stay
 That whirl along
 Bright paths whence echo raises
 The phantom of your praises,
 Child, my song !

Beyond all other things
That give my words fleet wings,
 Fleet wings and strong,
You set their jesses ringing
Till hardly can I, singing,
 Stint my song.

But all things better, friend,
And worse must find an end :
 And, right or wrong,
'Tis time, lest rhyme should baffle,
I doubt, to put a snaffle
 On my song.

And never may your ear
Aught harsher hear or fear,
 Nor wolfish night
Nor dog-toothed winter snarling
Behind your steps, my darling
 My delight !

For all the gifts you give
Me, dear, each day you live,
 Of thanks above
All thanks that could be spoken
Take not my song in token,
 Take my love.

A CHILD'S FUTURE

WHAT will it please you, my darling, hereafter to be?
Fame upon land will you look for, or glory by sea?
Gallant your life will be always, and all of it free.

Free as the wind when the heart of the twilight is
 stirred
Eastward, and sounds from the springs of the sunrise
 are heard
Free—and we know not another as infinite word.

Darkness or twilight or sunlight may compass us
 round,
Hate may arise up against us, or hope may confound,
Love may forsake us, yet may not the spirit be
 bound.

Free in oppression of grief as in ardour of joy
Still may the soul be, and each to her strength as a
 toy
Free in the glance of the man as the smile of the boy

Freedom alone is the salt and the spirit that gives
Life, and without her is nothing that verily lives :
Death cannot slay her : she laughs upon death and
forgives.

Brightest and hardiest of roses anear and afar
Glitters the blithe little face of you, round as a star :
Liberty bless you and keep you to be as you are.

England and liberty bless you and keep you to be
Worthy the name of their child and the sight of their
sea :

Fear not at all ; for a slave, if he fears not, is free.

SONNETS
ON
ENGLISH DRAMATIC POETS
(1590-1650)

I

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE.

CROWNED, girdled, garbed and shod with light and fire,
 Son first-born of the morning, sovereign star !
 Soul nearest ours of all, that wert most far,
 Most far off in the abysm of time, thy lyre
 Hung highest above the dawn-enkindled quire
 Where all ye sang together, all that are,
 And all the starry songs behind thy car
 Rang sequence, all our souls acclaim thee sire.

‘ If all the pens that ever poets held
 Had fed the feeling of their masters’ thoughts,’
 And as with rush of hurtling chariots
 The flight of all their spirits were impelled
 Toward one great end, thy glory—nay, not then,
 Not yet might’st thou be *praised enough of men.*

II

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Not if men's tongues and angels' all in one
 Spake, might the word be said that might speak Thee
 Streams, winds, woods, flowers, fields, mountains,
 yea, the sea,

What power is in them all to praise the sun?
 His praise is this,—he can be praised of none.

Man, woman, child, praise God for him, but he
 Exalts not to be worshipped, but to be.

He is, and, being, beholds his work well done.

All joy, all glory, all sorrow, all strength, all mirth,
 Are his without him, day were night on earth.

Time knows not his from time's own period.

All lutes, all harps, all viols, all flutes, all lyres,

Fall dumb before him ere one string suspire.

All stars are angels, but the sun is God.

III.

BEN FONSEN.

BROAD-BASED, broad-fronted, bounteous, multiform,
With many a valley impleached with ivy and vine,
Wherein the springs of all the streams run wine,
And many a crag full-faced against the storm,
The mountain where thy Muse's feet made warm
Those lawns that revelled with her dance divine
Shines yet with fire as it was wont to shine
From tossing torches round the dance aswarm.

Nor less, high-stationed on the grey grave heights,
High-thoughted seers with heaven's heart-kindling lights
Hold converse : and the herd of meaner things
Knows or by fiery scourge or fiery shaft
When wrath on thy broad brows has risen, and laughed,
Darkening thy soul with shadow of thunderous wings.

IV.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

AN hour ere sudden sunset fired the west,
 Arose two stars upon the pale deep east.
 The hall of heaven was clear for night's high feast,
 Yet was not yet day's fiery heart at rest.
 Love leapt up from his mother's burning breast
 To see those warm twin lights, as day decreased,
 Wax wider, till when all the sun had ceased
 As suns they shone from evening's kindled crest.
 Across them and between, a quickening fire,
 Flamed Venus, laughing with appeased desire.
 Their dawn, scarce lovelier for the gleam of tears,
 Filled half the hollow shell 'twixt heaven and earth
 With sound like moonlight, mingling moan and mirth,
 Which rings and glitters down the darkling years.

V.

PHILIP MASSINGER.

CLOUDS here and there arisen an hour past noon
 Chequered our English heaven with lengthening bars
 And shadow and sound of wheel-winged thunder-cars
Assembling strength to put forth tempest soon,
When the clear still warm concord of thy tune
 Rose under skies unscared by reddening Mars
 Yet, like a sound of silver speech of stars,
With full mild flame as of the mellowing moon.
Grave and great-hearted Massinger, thy face
High melancholy lights with loftier grace
 Than gilds the brows of revel : sad and wise,
The spirit of thought that moved thy deeper song,
Sorrow serene in soft calm scorn of wrong,
 Speaks patience yet from thy majestic eyes.

VIII.

THOMAS DECKER

*Out of the depths of darkling life where sun
Laughs piteously that sorrow should not know
Her own ill name, nor woe be counted woe ,
Where hate and craft and lust make dreaner din
Than sounds through dreams that grief holds revel in ,
What charm of joy bells ringing, streams that flow,
Winds that blow healing in each note they blow,
Is this that the outer darkness hears begin ?*

*O sweetest heart of all thy time save one,
Star seen for love's sake nearest to the sun,
Hung lamplike o'er a dense and doleful city,
Not Shakespeare's very spint, howe'er more great,
Than thine toward man was more compassionate,
Nor gave Chnst praise from lips more sweet with pity*

IX.

THOMAS MIDDLETON.

A WILD moon riding high from cloud to cloud,
That sees and sees not, glimmering far beneath,
Hell's children revel along the shuddering heath
With dirge-like mirth and raiment like a shroud:
A worse fair face than witchcraft's, passion-proud,
With brows blood-flecked behind their bridal wreath
And lips that bade the assassin's sword find sheath
Deep in the heart whereto love's heart was vowed:
A game of close contentious crafts and creeds
Played till white England bring black Spain to shame:
A son's bright sword and brighter soul, whose deeds
High conscience lights for mother's love and fame:
Pure gipsy flowers, and poisonous courtly weeds:
Such tokens and such trophies crown thy name.

Z

THOMAS HEYWOOD

TOM, if they loved thee best who called thee Tom,
 What else may all men call thee, seeing thus bright
 Even yet the laughing and the weeping light
 That still thy kind old eyes are kindled from?
 Small care was thine to assault and overcome
 Time and his child Oblivion yet of right
 Thy name has part with names of lordlier might
 For English love and homely sense of home,
 Whose fragrance keeps thy small sweet bayleaf young
 And gives it place aloft among thy peers
 Whence many a wreath once bolder strong Time
 has hurled
 And this thy praise is sweet on Shakespeare's tongue—
 'O good old man, how well in thee appears
 The constant service of the antique world !'

XI.

GEORGE CHAPMAN.

HIGH priest of Homer, not elect in vain,
 Deep trumpets blow before thee, shawms behind
 Mix music with the rolling wheels that wind
 Slow through the labouring triumph of thy train :
 Fierce history, molten in thy forging brain,
 Takes form and fire and fashion from thy mind,
 Tormented and transmuted out of kind :
 But howsoe'er thou shift thy strenuous strain,
 Like Tailor ¹ smooth, like Fisher ² swollen, and now
 Grim Yarrington ³ scarce bloodier marked than thou,
 Then bluff as Mayne's ⁴ or broad-mouthed Barry's ⁵ glee,
 Proud still with hoar predominance of brow
 And beard like foam swept off the broad blown sea,
 Where'er thou go, men's reverence goes with thee.

¹ Author of *The Hog hath lost his Pearl*.

² Author of *Fuinus Troes, or the True Trojans*.

³ Author of *Two Tragedies in One*.

⁴ Author of *The City Match*.

⁵ Author of *Ram-Alley, or Merry Tricks*.

XIV

JAMES SHIRLEY

THE dusk of day's decline was hard on dark
When evening trembled round thy glowworm lamp
That shone across her shades and dewy damp
A small clear beacon whose benignant spark
Was gracious yet for loners' eyes to mark,
Though charged the watchword of our English camp
Since the outposts rang round Marlowe's lion ramp
When thy steed a pace went ambling round Hyde Park.

And in the thickening twilight under thee
Walks Davenant, pensive in the paths where he,
The bluest threat that ever carolled love
In music made of morning's merriest heart,
Glad Suckling, stumbled from his seat above
And reeled on slippery roads of alien art.

XV.

THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN.

Sons born of many a loyal Muse to Ben,
 All true-begotten, warm with wine or ale,
 Bright from the broad light of his presence, hail !
 Prince Randolph, nighest his throne of all his men,
 Being highest in spirit and heart who hailed him then
 King, nor might other spread so blithe a sail :
 Cartwright, a soul pent in with narrower pale,
 Praised of thy sire for manful might of pen :
 Marmion, whose verse keeps always keen and fine
 The perfume of their Apollonian wine
 Who shared with that stout sire of all and thee
 The exuberant chalice of his echoing shrine :
 Is not your praise writ broad in gold which he
 Inscribed, that all who praise his name should see ?

XX.

THE MANY

II

Haughton, whose mirth gave woman all her will
Field, bright and loed with laughing flower and bird
And keen alternate notes of laud and gird
Barnes, darkening once with Borgia's deeds the quill
Which tuned the passion of Parthenophal
Blithe burly Porter, broad and bold of word
Wilkins, a voice with strenuous pity stirred
Turk Mason Brewer, whose tongue drops honey still
Rough Rowley, handling song with Esau's hand
Light Nabbes lean Sharpham, rank and raw by turns,
But fragrant with a forethought once of Burns :
Soft Davenport, sad robed, but blithe and bland :
Brome, gipsy led across the woodland ferns
Praise be with all, and place among our band.

XXI.

EPILOGUE.

OUR mother, which wast twice, as history saith,
 Found first among the nations : once, when she
 Who bore thine ensign saw the God in thee
 Smite Spain, and bring forth Shakespeare : once, when death
 Shrank, and Rome's bloodhounds cowered, at Milton's breath :
 More than thy place, then first among the free,
 More than that sovereign lordship of the sea
 Bequeathed to Cromwell from Elizabeth,
 More than thy fiery guiding-star, which Drake
 Hailed, and the deep saw lit again for Blake,
 More than all deeds wrought of thy strong right hand,
 This praise keeps most thy fame's memorial strong,
 That thou wast head of all these streams of song,
 ✓ And time bows down to thee as Shakespeare's land.

A DARK MONTH.

1

'La maison sans enfants !'—VICTOR HUGO.

I

A MONTH without sight of the sun
 Rising or reigning or setting
 Through days without use of the day,
 Who calls it the month of May?
 The sense of the name is undone
 And the sound of it fit for forgetting.

We shall not feel if the sun rise,
 We shall not care when it sets :
 If a nightingale make night's air
 As noontide, why should we care?
 Till a light of delight that is done rise,
 Extinguishing grey regrets ;

Till a child's face lighten again
 On the twilight of older faces ;
 Till a child's voice fall as the dew
 On furrows with heat parched through
 And all but hopeless of grain,
 Refreshing the desolate places—

Fall clear on the ears of us hearkening
 And hungering for food of the sound

And thirsting for joy of his voice
Till the hearts in us hear and rejoice,
And the thoughts of them doubting and
darkening
Rejoice with a glad thing found.

When the heart of our gladness is gone,
What comfort is left with us after?
When the light of our eyes is away,
What glory remains upon May,
What blessing of song is thereon
If we drink not the light of his laughter?

No small sweet face with the daytime
To welcome warmer than noon!
No sweet small voice as a bird's
To bring us the day's first words!
Mid May for us here is not Maytime:
No summer begins with June

A whole dead month in the dark,
A dawn in the mists that o'ercome her
Stuffed and smothered and sad—
Swift speed to it, barren and bad!
And return to us, voice of the lark,
And remain with us, sunlight of summer.

II.

ALAS, what right has the dawn to glimmer,
What right has the wind to do aught but
moan ?

All the day should be dimmer
Because we are left alone.

Yesternorn like a sunbeam present
Hither and thither a light step smiled,
And made each place for us pleasant
With the sense or the sight of a child.

But the leaves persist as before, and after
Our parting the dull day still bears flowers ;
And songs less bright than his laughter
Deride us from birds in the bowers.

Birds, and blossoms, and sunlight only,
As though such folly sufficed for spring !
As though the house were not lonely
For want of the child its king !

III

ASLEEP and afar to-night my darling
Lies, and heeds not the night,
If winds be stirring or storms be snarling ;
For his sleep is its own sweet light.

I sit where he sat beside me quaffing
The wine of story and song
Poured forth of immortal cups, and laughing
When mirth in the draught grew strong.

I broke the gold of the words, to melt it
For hands but seven years old,
And they caught the tale as a bird, and felt it
More bright than visible gold.

And he drank down deep, with his eyes broad
beaming,
Here in this room where I am,
The golden vintage of Shakespeare, gleaming
In the silver vessels of Lamb

Here by my hearth where he was I listen
For the shade of the sound of a word,
Athirst for the birdlike eyes to glisten,
For the tongue to chirp like a bird.

At the blast of battle, how broad they brightened,
Like fire in the spheres of stars,
And clung to the pictured page, and lightened
As keen as the heart of Mars !

At the touch of laughter, how swift it twittered
The shrillest music on earth ;
How the lithe limbs laughed and the whole child
glittered
With radiant riot of mirth !

Our Shakespeare now, as a man dumb-stricken,
Stands silent there on the shelf :
And my thoughts, that had song in the heart of them,
sicken,
And relish not Shakespeare's self.

And my mood grows moodier than Hamlet's even,
And man delights not me,
But only the face that morn and even
My heart leapt only to see.

That my heart made merry within me seeing,
And sang as his laugh kept time :
But song finds now no pleasure in being,
And love no reason in rhyme.

IV

MILD May blossom and proud sweet bay-flower,
What, for shame, would you have with us here?
It is not the month of the May flower
Thus, but the fall of the year

Flowers open only their lips in derision,
Leaves are as fingers that point in scorn
The shows we see are a vision,
Spring is not verily born

Yet boughs turn supple and buds grow sappy,
As though the sun were indeed the sun
And all our woods are happy
With all their birds save one

But spring is over, but summer is over,
But autumn is over, and winter stands
With his feet sunk deep in the clover
And cowslips cold in his hands

His hoar grim head has a hawthorn bonnet,
His gnarled gaunt hand has a gay green staff
With new blown rose blossom on it
But his laugh is a dead man's laugh.

The laugh of spring that the heart seeks after,
The hand that the whole world yearns to kiss,
It rings not here in his laughter,
The sign of it is not this.

There is not strength in it left to splinter
Tall oaks, nor frost in his breath to sting :
Yet it is but a breath as of winter,
And it is not the hand of spring.

The morning that brings after many
Days fled with no light upon any

 The small face back which is gone ,
When the loved little hands once more
Shall struggle and strain at the door
 They beat their summons upon

VII.

If a soul for but seven days were cast out of heaven
and its mirth,
They would seem to her fears like as seventy years
upon earth.

Even and morrow should seem to her sorrow as long
As the passage of numberless ages in slumberless
song.

Dawn, roused by the lark, would be surely as dark in
her sight
As her measureless measure of shadowless pleasure
was bright.

Noon, gilt but with glory of gold, would be hoary
and grey
In her eyes that had gazed on the depths, unamazed
with the day.

Night hardly would seem to make darker her dream
never done,
When it could but withhold what a man may behold
of the sun.

IX.

As a poor man hungering stands with insatiate eyes
and hands

Void of bread

Right in sight of men that feast while his famine with
no least

Crumb is fed,

Here across the garden wall can I hear strange chil
dren call,

Watch them play,

From the windowed seat above, whence the goodlier
child I love

Is away

Here the sights we saw together moved his fancy like
a feather

To and fro,

Now to wonder, and thereafter to the sunny storm of
laughter

Loud and low—

Sights engraven on storied pages where man's tale of
seven swift ages

All was told—

Seen of eyes yet bright from heaven—for the lips that
laughed were seven

Sweet years old.

X.

Why should May remember
March, if March forget
The days that began with December,
The nights that a frost could fret?

All their griefs are done with
Now the bright months bless
Fit souls to rejoice in the sun with,
Fit heads for the wind's caress,

Souls of children quickening
With the whole world's mirth,
Heads closer than field flowers thickening
That crowd and illuminate earth,

Now that May's call musters
Files of baby bands
To marshal in joyfuller clusters
Than the flowers that encumber their hands

Yet morose November
Found them no less gay,
With nought to forget or remember
Less bright than a branch of may

All the seasons moving
Move their minds alike
Applauding, acclaiming, approving
All hours of the year that strike.

So my heart may fret not,
Wondering if my friend
Remember me not or forget not
Or ever the month find end.

Not that love sows lighter
Seed in children sown,
But that life being lit in them brighter
Moves fleeter than even our own.

May nor yet September
Binds their hearts, that yet
Remember, forget, and remember,
Forget, and recall, and forget.

XI

As light on a lake's face moving
Between a cloud and a cloud
Till night reclaim it, reproving
The heart that exults too loud,

The heart that watching rejoices
When soft it swims into sight
Applauded of all the voices
And stars of the windy night,

So brief and unsure, but sweeter
Than ever a moon-dawn smiled,
Moves, measured of no tune's metre,
The song in the soul of a child,

The song that the sweet soul singing
Half listens, and hardly hears,
Though sweeter than joy bells ringing
And brighter than joy's own tears,

The song that remembrance of pleasure
Begins, and forgetfulness ends
With a soft swift change in the measure
That rings in remembrance of friends

As the moon on the lake's face flashes,
So haply may gleam at whiles
A dream through the dear deep lashes
Whereunder a child's eye smiles,

And the least of us all that love him
May take for a moment part
With angels around and above him,
And I find place in his heart.

VII.

CHILD, were you kinless and lonely—
 Dear, were you kin to me—
 My love were compassionate only
 Or such as it needs would be.

But eyes of father and mother
 Like sun light shed on you shine
 What need you have heed of another
 Such new strange love as is mine?

It is not meet if untruly
 Hands take of the children's bread
 And cast it to dogs, but truly
 The dogs after all would be fed

On crumbs from the children's table
 That crumble, dropped from above,
 My heart feeds, fed with unstable
 Loose waifs of a child's light love.

Though love in your heart were brittle
 As glass that breaks with a touch,
 You haply would lend him a little
 Who surely would give you much

XIII.

HERE is a rough
Rude sketch of my friend,
Faint-coloured enough
And unworthily penned.

Fearlessly fair
And triumphant he stands,
And holds unaware
Friends' hearts in his hands ;

Stalwart and straight
As an oak that should bring
Forth gallant and great
Fresh roses in spring.

On the paths of his pleasure
All graces that wait
What metre shall measure
What rhyme shall relate

Each action, each motion,
Each feature, each limb,
Demands a devotion
In honour of him :

A DARK MONTH

Head that the hand
Of a god might have blest,
Laid lustrous and bland
On the curve of its crest *

Mouth sweeter than cherries
Keen eyes as of Mars
Browner than berries
And brighter than stars

Nor colour nor wordy
Weak song can declare
The stature how sturdy,
How stalwart his air

As a king in his bright
Presence chamber may be,
So seems he in height—
Twice higher than your knee.

As a warrior sedate
With reserve of his power,
So seems he in state—
As tall as a flower .

As a rose overpowering
The ranks of the rest
That beneath it lie cowering,
Less bright than their best

And his hands are as sunny
As ruddy ripe corn
Or the browner-hued honey
From heather-bells borne.

When summer sits proudest,
Fulfilled with its mirth,
And rapture is loudest
In air and on earth,

The suns of all hours
That have ripened the roots
Bring forth not such flowers
And beget not such fruits.

And well though I know it,
As fain would I write,
Child, never a poet
Could praise you aright.

I bless you? the blessing
Were less than a jest
Too poor for expressing ;
I come to be blest,

With humble and dutiful
Heart, from above :
Bless me, O my beautiful
Innocent love !

A DARK MONTH

This rhyme in your praise
With a smile was begun ,
But the goal of his ways
Is uncovered to none,

1

Nor pervious till after
The limit impend ,
It is not in laughter
These rhymes of you end.

XIV.

SPRING, and fall, and summer, and winter,
Which may Earth love least of them all,
Whose arms embrace as their signs imprint her,
Summer, or winter, or spring, or fall ?

The clear-eyed spring with the wood-birds mating,
The rose-red summer with eyes aglow,
The yellow fall with serene eyes waiting,
The wild-eyed winter with hair all snow ?

Spring's eyes are soft, but if frosts benumb her
As winter's own will her shrewd breath sting :
Storms may rend the raiment of summer,
And fall grow bitter as harsh-lipped spring.

One sign for summer and winter guides me,
One for spring, and the like for fall :
Whichever from sight of my friend divides me,
That is the worst ill season of all.

XV.

Worse than winter is spring
If I come not to sight of my king
But then what a spring will it be
When my king takes homage of me !

I send his grace from afar
Homage, as though to a star ,
As a shepherd whose flock takes flight
May worship a star by night.

As a flock that a wolf is upon
My songs take flight and are gone
No heart is in any to sing
Aught but the praise of my king.

Fain would I once and again
Sing deeds and passions of men
But ever a child's head gleams
Between my work and my dreams.

Between my hand and my eyes
The lines of a small face rise,
And the lines I trace and retrace
Are none but those of the face.

XVI.

TILL the tale of all this flock of days alike
 All be done,
Weary days of waiting till the month's hand strike
 Thirty-one,
Till the clock's hand of the month break off, and end
 With the clock,
Till the last and whitest sheep at last be penned
 Of the flock,
I their shepherd keep the count of night and day
 With my song,
Though my song be, like this month which once was
 May,
 All too long.

XVII

THE incarnate sun, a tall strong youth,
On old Greek eyes in sculpture smiled
But truer had it given the truth
To shape him like a child.

No face full grown of all our dearest
So lightens all our darkness, none
Most loved of all our hearts ho'd nearest
So far outshines the sun,

As when with sh' shy smiles that feign
Doubt if the hour be clear, the time
Fit to break off my work again
Or sport of prose or rhyme,

My friend peers in on me with merry
Wise face, and though the sky stay dim
The very light of day, the very
Sun's self comes in with him.

XVIII.

Out of sight,
Out of mind !
Could the light
Prove unkind ?

Can the sun
Quite forget
What was done
Ere he set ?

Does the moon
When she wanes
Leave no tune
That remains

In the void
Shell of night
Overcloyed
With her light ?

Must the shore
At low tide
Feel no more
Hope or pride,

A DARK MONTH

No intense
Joy to be,
In the serse
Of the sea—

In the pulses
Of her shocks
It repulses,
When its rocks

Thrill and ring
As with glee?
Has my king
Cast off me,

Whom no bird
Flying south
Brings one word
From his mouth?

Not the ghost
Of a word
Riding post
Have I heard,

Since the day
When my king
Took away
With him spring,

And the cup
Of each flower
Shrivelled up
That same hour,

With no light
Left behind.
Out of sight,
Out of mind !

XIX.

BECAUSE I adore you

And fall

On the knees of my spirit before you—

After all,

You need not insult,

My king,

With neglect, though your spirit exult

In the spring,

Even me, though not worth,

God knows,

One word of you sent me in mirth,

Or one rose

Out of all in your garden

That grow

Where the frost and the wind never harden

Flakes of snow,

Nor ever is rain

At all,

But the roses rejoice to remain

Fair and tall—

The roses of love,
More sweet
Than blossoms that rain from above
Round our feet,

When under high bowers
We pass,
Where the west wind freckles with flowers
All the grass.

But a child's thoughts bear
More bright
Sweet visions by day, and more fair
Dreams by night,

Than summer's whole treasure
Can be :
What am I that his thought should take pleasure,
Then, in me ?

I am only my love's
True lover,
With a nestful of songs, like doves
Under cover,

That I bring in my cap
Fresh caught,
To be laid on my small king's lap —
Worth just nought.

A DARK MONTH.

Yet it haply may hap
That he,
When the mirth in his veins is as sap
In a tree,

Will remember me too
Some day
Ere the transit be thoroughly through
Of this May—

Or perchance, if such grace
May be,
Some night when I dream of his face,
Dream of me.

Or if this be too high
A hope
For me to prefigure in my
Horoscope,

He may dream of the place
Where we
Basked once in the light of his face,
Who now see

Nought brighter, not one
Thing bright,
Than the stars and the moon and the sun,
Day nor night.

XX.

Day by darkling day,
Overpassing, bears away
Somewhat of the burden of this weary May.

Night by numbered night,
Waning, brings more near in sight
Hope that grows to vision of my heart's delight.

Nearer seems to burn
In the dawn's rekindling urn
Flame of fragrant incense, hailing his return.

Louder seems each bird
In the brightening branches heard
Still to speak some ever more delightful word.

All the mists that swim
Round the dawns that grow less dim
Still wax brighter and more bright with hope of him.

All the suns that rise
Bring that day more near our eyes
When the sight of him shall clear our clouded skies.

All the winds that roam
Fruitful fields or fruitless foam
Blow the bright hour near that brings his bright
face home

XXI.

I HEAR of two far hence
In a garden met,
And the fragrance blown from thence
Fades not yet.

The one is seven years old,
And my friend is he :
But the years of the other have told
Eighty-three.

To hear these twain converse
Or to see them greet
Were sweeter than softest verse
May be sweet.

The hoar old gardener there
With an eye more mild
Perchance than his mild white hair
Meets the child.

I had rather hear the words
That the twain exchange
Than the songs of all the birds
There that range,

A DARK MONTH

Call, chirp, and twitter there
Through the garden-beds
Where the sun alike sees fair
Those two heads,

And which may holier be
Held in heaven of those
Or more worth heart's thanks to see
No man knows.

XXII.

Of such is the kingdom of heaven.
No glory that ever was shed
From the crowning star of the seven
That crown the north world's head,

No word that ever was spoken
Of human or godlike tongue,
Gave ever such godlike token
Since human harps were strung.

No sign that ever was given
To faithful or faithless eyes
Showed ever beyond clouds riven
So clear a Paradise.

Earth's creeds may be seventy times seven
And blood have defiled each creed :
If of such be the kingdom of heaven,
It must be heaven indeed.

XXIII.

THE wind on the downs is bright
As though from the sea
And morning and night
Take comfort again with me

He is nearer to-day,
Each night to each morning saith,
Whose return shall revive dead May
With the balm of his breath.

The sunset says to the moon,
He is nearer to-night
Whose coming in June
Is looked for more than the light.

Bird answers to bird,
Hour passes the sign on to hour,
And for joy of the bright news heard
Flower murmurs to flower

The ways that were glad of his feet
In the woods that he knew
Grow softer to meet
The sense of his footfall anew.

He is near now as day,
Says hope to the new-born light :
He is near now as June is to May,
Says love to the night.

XXIV

Good things I keep to console me
For lack of the best of all,
A child to command and control me,
Bid come and remain at his call.

Sun, wind, and woodland and highland,
Give all that ever they gave
But my world is a cultureless island,
My spirit a masterless slave.

And friends are about me, and better
At summons of no man stand
But I pine for the touch of a fetter,
The curb of a strong king's hand.

Each hour of the day in her season
Is mine to be served as I will
And for no more exquisite reason
Are all served idly and ill.

By slavery my sense is corrupted,
My soul not fit to be free :
I would fain be controlled, interrupted,
Compelled as a thrall may be.

For fault of spur and of bridle
I tire of my stall to death :
My sail flaps joyless and idle
For want of a small child's breath.

XXV

WHITER and whiter
The dark lines grow,
And broader opens and brighter
The sense of the text below

Nightfall and morrow
Bring nigher the boy
Whom wanting we want not sorrow,
Whom having we want no joy

Clearer and clearer
The sweet sense grows
Of the word which hath summer for hearer,
The word on the lips of the rose.

Dusklily dwindles
Each deathlike day,
Till June rearing rekindles
The depth of the darkness of May

A DARK MONTH.

XXVI.

*'In his bright radiance and collateral light
Must I be comforted, not in his sphere.'*

STARS in heaven are many,
Suns in heaven but one :
Nor for man may any
Star supplant the sun.

Many a child as joyous
As our far-off king
Meets as though to annoy us
In the paths of spring.

Sure as spring gives warning,
All things dance in tune :
Sun on Easter morning,
Cloud and windy moon,

Stars between the tossing
Boughs of tuneful trees,
Sails of ships recrossing
Leagues of dancing seas ;

A DARK MONTH

Best, in all this playtime,
Best of all in tune,
Girls more glad than Maytime,
Boys more bright than June,

Mixed with all those dances,
Far through field and street
Sing their silent glances,
Ring their radiant feet.

Flowers wherewith May crowned us
Fall ere June be crowned :
Children blossom round us
All the whole year round.

Is the garland worthless
For one rose the less,
And the feast made murtherless ?
Love, at least, says yes

Strange it were, with many
Stars enkindling air,
Should but one find any
Welcome strange it were,

Had one star alone won
Praise for light from far
Nay, love needs his own one
Bright particular star

Hope and recollection
Only lead him right
In its bright reflection
And collateral light.

Find as yet we may not
Comfort in its sphere :
Yet these days will weigh not
When it warms us here ;

When full-orbed it rises,
Now divined afar :
None in all the skies is
Half so good a star ;

None that seers importune
Till a sign be won :
Star of our good fortune,
Rise and reign, our sun !

XXVIL

I pass by the small room now forlorn
Where once each night as I passed I knew
A child's bright sleep from even to morn
Made sweet the whole night through.

As a soundless shell, as a songless nest,
Seems now the room that was radiant then
And fragrant with his happier rest
Than that of slumbering men.

The day therein is less than the day,
The night is indeed night now therein
Heavier the dark seems there to weigh,
And slower the dawns begin.

As a nest fulfilled with birds, as a shell
Fulfilled with breath of a god's own hymn,
Again shall be this bare blank cell,
Made sweet again with him.

XXVIII.

SPRING darkens before us,
A flame going down,
With chant from the chorus
Of days without crown—
Cloud, rain, and sonorous
Soft wind on the down.

She is wearier not of us
Than we of the dream
That spring was to love us
And joy was to gleam
Through the shadows above us
That shift as they stream.

Half dark and half hoary,
Float far on the loud
Mild wind, as a glory
Half pale and half proud
From the twilight of story,
Her tresses of cloud ;

A DARK MONTH

Like phantoms that glimmer
Of glories of old
With ever yet dimmer
Pale circlets of gold
As darkness grows grimmer
And memory more cold.

Like hope growing clearer
With wane of the moon,
Shines toward us the nearer
Gold frontlet of June,
And a face with it dearer
Than midsummer noon.

XXIX.

You send me your love in a letter,
I send you my love in a song :
Ah child, your gift is the better,
Mine does you but wrong.

No fame, were the best less brittle,
No praise, were it wide as earth,
Is worth so much as a little
Child's love may be worth.

We see the children above us
As they might angels above :
Come back to us, child, if you love us,
And bring us your love.

xxx

No time for books or for letters •
What time should there be?
No room for tasks and their fetters
Full room to be free.

The wind and the sun and the Maytime
Had never a guest
More worthy the most that has playtime
Could give of its best.

If rain should come on, peradventure,
(But sunshine forbid !)
Vain hope in us haply might venture
To dream as it did.

But never may come, of all comers
Least welcome, the rain,
To mix with his servant the summer's
Rose garlanded train !

He would write, but his hours are as busy
As bees in the sun,
And the jubilant whirl of their dizzy
Dance never is done.

The message is more than a letter,
Let love understand,
And the thought of his joys even better
Than sight of his hand.

XXXI

Wind, high souled, full hearted
South west wind of the spring!
Ere April and earth had parted,
Skies, bright with thy forward wing,
Grew dark in an hour with the shadow behind it, that
bade not a bird dare sing

Wind whose feet are sunny,
Wind whose wings are cloud,
With lips more sweet than honey
Still, speak they low or loud,
Rejoice now again in the strength of thine heart let
the depth of thy soul wax proud

We hear thee singing or sighing,
Just not given to sight,
All but visibly flying
Between the clouds and the light,
And the light in our hearts is enkindled, the shadow
therein of the clouds put to flight.

From the gift of thine hands we gather
The core of the flowers therein,
Keen glad heart of heather,
Hot sweet heart of whin,
'Twin breaths in thy godlike breath close blended of
wild spring's wildest of kin.

All but visibly beating
We feel thy wings in the far
Clear waste, and the plumes of them fleeting,
Soft as swan's plumes are,
And strong as a wild swan's pinions, and swift as the
flash of the flight of a star.

As the flight of a planet enkindled
Seems thy far soft flight
Now May's reign has dwindled
And the crescent of June takes light
And the presence of summer is here, and the hope of
a welcomer presence in sight.

Wind, sweet-souled, great-hearted
Southwest wind on the wold !
From us is a glory departed
That now shall return as of old,
Borne back on thy wings as an eagle's expanding, and
crowned with the sundawn's gold.

There is not a flower but rejoices,
There is not a leaf but has heard
All the fields find voices,
All the woods are stirred
There is not a nest but is brighter because of the
coming of one bright bird.

Out of dawn and morning,
Noon and afternoon,
The sun to the world gives warning
Of news that brightens the moon ,
And the stars all night exult with us, hearing of joy
that shall come with June.

I or the roof overhead of the pines is astir with delight
as of jubilant voices,
And the floor underfoot of the bracken and heather
alive as a heart that rejoices.
For the house that was childless awhile, and the light
of it darkened, the pulse of it dwindled,
Rings radiant again with a child's bright feet, with the
light of his face is relindled.
And the ways of the meadows that knew him, the
sweep of the down that the slay's belt closes,
Grow gladder at heart than the soft wind made them
whose feet were but fragrant with roses,
Though the fall of the year be upon us, who trusted
in June and by June were defrauded,
And the summer that brought us not back the desire
of our eyes be gone hence unapplauded.
For July came joyless among us, and August went
out from us and and s'enle,
And the hope of our hearts, as it seemed, was no
more than a flower that the seasons imperil,
And the joy of our hearts, as it seemed, than a thought
which regret had not heart to remember,
Till four dark months overpast were atoned for, and
summer began in September
Hark, April again as a bird in the house with a child's
voice hither and thither
See, May in the garden again with a child's face
cheering the woods ere they wither
June laughs in the light of his eyes, and July on the
sunbright cheeks of him slumbers,

And August glows in a smile more sweet than the
cadence of gold-mouthed numbers.
In the morning the sight of him brightens the sun,
and the noon with delight in him flushes,
And the silence of nightfall is music about him as
soft as the sleep that it hushes.
We awake with a sense of a sunrise that is not a gift
of the sundawn's giving,
And a voice that salutes us is sweeter than all sounds
else in the world of the living,
And a presence that warms us is brighter than all in
the world of our visions beholden,
Though the dreams of our sleep were as those that
the light of a world without grief makes golden.
For the best that the best of us ever devised as a
likeness of heaven and its glory,
What was it of old, or what is it and will be for ever,
in song or in story,
Or in shape or in colour of carven or painted resem-
blance, adored of all ages,
But a vision recorded of children alive in the pictures
of old or the pages?
Where children are not, heaven is not, and heaven if
they come not again shall be never :
But the face and the voice of a child are assurance of
heaven and its promise for ever.